

Becoming a Schismatic:

The Concepts of the “Schism” and “Schismatic” in the Church and State

Discourses of Seventeenth and Eighteenth-century Russia

By

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## **Abstract**

This dissertation explores the role of language in the identification and consequent persecution of Russian religious dissent, known as the “Schism” (*Raskol*), or the Old Belief (*staroverie*). In the mid-seventeenth century, the Russian patriarch Nikon (1652-1666) imposed changes in the liturgical books, spurring opposition from some clerics and lay people. The church hierarchy condemned this “mutiny” in words and strove to suppress it through the vehicle of state power. Nonetheless, in the next century and a half the “Schism” spread dramatically throughout the Russian empire, eliciting considerable debate. Church and state authorities produced numerous polemical as well as regulatory documents as officials struggled to figure out how to identify dissenters, and how to categorize them within the intensely bureaucratic structures of the modernizing Russian state. This study investigates the rhetoric of these debates in order to draw a comprehensive picture of the changes in the official discourse of the “Schism” throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

The dissertation challenges the validity of the concept of the “Schism” itself. First and foremost, since its inception it was a polemical and pejorative construct rather than an analytical category. More significantly, this concept’s meaning changed dramatically over the decades and centuries following its inception. What started in the seventeenth century as the language of ecclesiastical ostracism and stigmatization by the beginning of the eighteenth century had transformed into the language of social order and discipline. From the mid-eighteenth century the concept of “Schism” was linked directly to the doctrine of religious toleration, which the Russian elite adopted from the French Enlightenment.

The history of the concept of “Schism” is not just a story of a stereotypically Russian exercise in subjugation. On the contrary, the people, whom the state and the church tried to squeeze

into the category of “schismatics,” actively appropriated the discourse of the “Schism” themselves. They turned the language of exclusion and persecution into a vehicle to manifest their social rights and religious liberties.

## **Acknowledgements**

This dissertation is a result of many years of studies and research across vast geographical space. I started this path in my native town of Kirov at the Viatka State University of Humanities, then pursued a master's degree at the European University at St. Petersburg, and, finally, found myself in the PhD program at the University of Kansas. I am grateful to my professors and colleagues at all of these places for constantly challenging my thinking and broadening my intellectual horizons. I especially appreciate the input of my dissertation committee members, Nathan Wood, Katherine Clark, Michael Zogry, and Timothy Miller, who graciously agreed to read my research on different stages of its completion and provided invaluable comments and suggestions on it.

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the archivists and librarians in Kirov, St. Petersburg, and Moscow. However, it is the patient and supportive staff of KU Libraries where I have spent countless hours in the last six years, to whom I owe the understanding of what research library really is about.

Last but not least, my biggest gratitude belongs to my parents, my wife Marija and daughter Ema. I cannot express how thankful I am for your love, support and understanding.

I dedicate this dissertation to my grandfather Efim Grishin who had passed away less than a year ago.

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## INTRODUCTION

In the mid-seventeenth century the newly appointed Patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church, Nikon, decided to correct and unify the liturgical practice. His corrections elicited a fierce reaction on the part of some Orthodox clergy and lay people who were concerned about the corruption of the Russian Orthodox Church and the coming of the Apocalypse. The split in the Church's flock became known as the "Schism" and involved a significant portion of the country's population. Today, many people in Russia and around the globe continue to adhere to pre-Nikonian Orthodoxy. For one and a half centuries the label "schismatics" (*raskol'niki*) was exclusively used to define the opponents of the liturgical changes of the mid-seventeenth century. It was only during the reign of Catherine the Great (1762-1796) that the less derogatory term "Old Ritualists" (*staroobriadtsy*) was introduced. To English-speaking readers the opponents of Nikon's corrections are better known as Old Believers (verbatim translation of Russian *starovery*) and the whole movement as Old Belief (*staraia vera*).

The term "Schism"/Old Belief is one of the key concepts of Russian history. Due to the violent development of the conflict over the liturgical changes and the significant impact it had on the subsequent history of Russia and many neighboring countries, historians and non-specialists alike continue to appeal to the "Schism"/Old Belief as a crucial historical and cultural phenomenon.<sup>1</sup> However, students of Russian history and people interested in it operate as though this category is self-evident: it refers to a historic occurrence taken in its entirety with clearly defined features and qualities, easily recognizable in the documents of the past. However, as with

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example, recent popular works on the topic: O.L. Shakhnazarov, "Old Believerism and Bolshevism," *Russian Social Science Review*, vol. 44, no. 6 (November-December 2003), 4-50; A. Glinchikova, *Raskol ili sryv "russkoi Reformatsii"?* (Moscow: Kul'turnaia revoliutsiia, 2008); A.V. Pyzhikov, *Grani russkogo raskola. Zametki o nashei istorii ot XVII veka do 1917 goda* (Moscow: Drevlekhramilishche, 2013); D.A. Urushev, *Russkoe staroobriadchestvo. Traditsii, istoriia, kul'tura* (Moscow: EKSMO, 2016), and many others.

any other abstract category invoked to signify a complex historic phenomenon, the concept of the “Schism”/Old Belief is too general to reflect the intricacy of the historic process. At the same time, it is often used in anachronistic ways that subsequently appropriate (or reject) occurrences or actors in order to satisfy a particular interpretive purpose. In other words, after the fact, historians have decided who was a “true” “schismatic”/Old Believer and who was not, glossing over the multiplicity of historical contexts and people’s own, often controversial, ways of self-identification.

Scholarly research requires heuristic categories as an instrument of analysis, but scholars must acknowledge their problematic nature in order to escape the trap of unintended modernization of the past. As Jonathan Clark remarked in his pivotal study of Early Modern English society, “the historian is always condemned to see the past through a glass, darkly; the introduction of anachronistic categories turns that glass into a mirror.”<sup>2</sup> In the case of the “Schism” the problem of modernization is especially intricate since this category did in fact exist long before the seventeenth century, and it has been transformed profoundly ever since. Therefore, scholars analyzing primary sources about the “Schism” and “schismatics” often miss numerous contemporary contexts due to a false sense of familiarity. A way to escape these shortcomings is to situate the category in manifold historical contexts, and follow its formation throughout time and space.<sup>3</sup>

Generally speaking, this dissertation is about how in the context of a quarrel over liturgical changes within the Russian Orthodox Church a neutral notion of “schism” (*raskol* or *raskolenie*), referring to a split or doubt, evolved into the “Schism,” a signifier for a phenomenon of Russian

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<sup>2</sup> Jonathan C.D. Clark, *English Society, 1660-1832: Religion, Ideology, and Politics during the Ancien Regime* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 13.

<sup>3</sup> It is an operation similar to a philosophical method of genealogy, however, stripped of the teleology (see Nietzschean “genealogy,” especially popularized in Michel Foucault’s works).

history. At the same time, this dissertation deals with the power of language in the period of early modernity: it investigates the church and state discursive practices of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and formative power they bore. Ultimately, I strive to understand the practice of ecclesiastical, political, and social power.

## Historiography

The history of the “Schism” is one of the better-developed areas in the historiography of Russia. Since the end of the eighteenth century clerics, writers, amateur and professional historians in Russia and abroad produced thousands of titles trying to explain its origins and the secret of its vitality. As of now, the topic is far from being exhausted; on the contrary, new paradigms present opportunities for a major reconsideration of the Old Belief.

The first works debating the history of the “Schism” came out already in the seventeenth century and the fascination with this theme has not ceased ever since.<sup>4</sup> Among early authors the most evocative is Ignatii (Rimskii-Korsakov) (c. 1639-1701), metropolitan of Siberia and Tobol’sk, who created a gripping conspiratorial account of the opposition to Nikon’s changes.<sup>5</sup> However, the first scholarly studies on the topic appeared only in the second half of the nineteenth century. Champions of the official Church, such as Makarii (Bulgakov) (1816-1882), Nikolai

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<sup>4</sup> See footnote 1. In the last decades appeared several works dedicated to the historiography of the Old Belief itself: V.V. Molzinskii, *Staroobriadcheskoe dvizhenie vtoroi poloviny XVII veka v russkoi nauchno-istoricheskoi literature* (St. Petersburg: Sankt-Peterburgskaia Gosudarstvennaia Akademiia Kultury, 1997); Idem., *Ocherki russkoi dorevoliutsionnoi istoriografii staroobriadchestva* (St. Petersburg: Sankt-Peterburgskii Gosudarstvennyi Universitet Kultury i Iskusstv, 2001). See also: Robert O. Crummey, “Past and Current Interpretations of the Old Belief,” in Idem., *Old Believers in a Changing World* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2011), 5-16.

<sup>5</sup> *Poslaniia blazhennago Ignatii, mitropolita Sibirskago i Tobol'skago* (Kazan: v Tipografii Gubernskago pravleniia, 1857). About Ignatii and his writings on Old Believers, see: A.P. Bogdanov, *Ot letopisaniia k issledovaniu: Russkie istoriki poslednei chetverti XVII veka* (Moscow: RISC, 1995), 203-205. Later works influenced by Ignatii’s writings: Dimitrii (Tuptalo), *Rozysk o raskolnicheskoi brynskoi vere, o uchenii ikh, o delakh ikh* (Moscow: Tipografiia Sinoda, 1762); Andrei (Ioannov), protoierei, *Polnoe istoricheskoe izvestie o staroobriadtsakh, ikh uchenii, delakh i razglasiakh, sobrannoe iz potaennykh staroobriadcheskikh predanii, zapisok i pisem*, 4 vols. (St. Petersburg: Izdatel'stvo Imperatorskoi Akademii nauk, 1794).

Subbotin (1827-1905), and Petr Smirnov (1861-unknown), tried to propagate well-informed, yet highly hostile interpretation of the “Schism.”<sup>6</sup> All three of them were involved in “anti-schismatic” missionary efforts, and as a result their studies had a very practical aim - to prove that Old Believers were deluded. Consequently, although their work was very fruitful especially in uncovering new sources on the beginning of the Old Belief, the very purpose of their writings did not imply a quest for objectivity.<sup>7</sup>

At the same time, some representatives of the official Church embraced a more balanced view of the Nikon’s changes and opposition to them. Evgenii Golubinskii (1834-1912) and Nikolai Kapterev (1847-1917), both professors of the Moscow Ecclesiastical Academy, the highest educational institution of the Russian Orthodox Church, recognized as legitimate the Russian service books that Nikon had replaced. It is especially significant that they attested to the antiquity of the two-fingered sign of the cross as compared to the three-fingered and, therefore, acknowledged the formal correctness of the defenders of old ways. Kapterev also emphasized that the changes in the liturgical practice should be examined in the wider political and cultural contexts of the era. In particular, he proposed to take into account the longer history of book printing and correction efforts in Muscovy, the historically complex relations between Russian civil and spiritual authorities, and the Muscovite rulers’ imperialistic claim of a protectorate over Orthodox

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<sup>6</sup> Makarii (Bulgakov), *Istoriia russkogo raskola, izvestnogo pod imenem staroobriadchestva* (St. Petersburg: Tipografiia Koroleva i Ko, 1855); P.S. Smirnov, *Istoriia russkogo raskola staroobriadchestva* (Riazan’: Tipografiia V. O. Tarasova, 1893); Idem., *Vnutrennie voprosy v raskole v XVII veke* (St. Petersburg: Pechatnia ‘S. P. Iakovleva’, 1898); Idem., *Spory i razdeleniia v russkom raskole v pervoi chetverti XVIII veka* (St. Petersburg: Tipografiia M. Merkusheva, 1909); N.I. Subbotin, *Istoriia Belokrinitsoi ierarkhii* (Moscow: Tipografiia T. Ris, 1874); Idem., *Istoriia tak nazyvaemogo Avstriiskogo ili Belokrinitsoi sviashchestva*, 2 vols. (Tipografiia E. Lissnera i Iu. Romana, 1886-1899); and many others.

<sup>7</sup> Especially fruitful in uncovering and publishing new sources was N.I. Subbotin and the missionary journal *Bratskoe Slovo* (The Brotherly Word), founded and edited by him. See the still very significant multivolume edition *Materialy dlia istorii raskola za pervoe vremia ego sushchestvovaniia, izdavaemye Bratstvom sv. Petra mitropolita*, vol. 1-9 (Moscow: Tipografiia E. Lissner i Iu. Roman, 1875-1895).

Christians in Eastern Europe and Middle East.<sup>8</sup> Nonetheless, both Kapterev and Golubinskii, viewed Nikon's changes as a historically progressive endeavor.

Afanasii Shchapov (1831-1876), a professor of Kazan University, took a radically different approach to the history of the "Schism." He saw its root in a fundamental conflict that emerged within Muscovite society in the seventeenth century, between new and old Russia.<sup>9</sup> Even though Shchapov's initial glorification of the innovators shifted towards commiseration with their opponents, it did not alter his general historical scheme.<sup>10</sup> In a highly influential study published in 1862, Shchapov famously argued that the "Schism" (*Raskol*) was a "mighty, frightening communal opposition of taxpayers' communities [*zemstvo*], of the whole mass of the people, against the entire governmental regime - ecclesiastical and civil."<sup>11</sup>

Shchapov's interest in the underlying social reasons for Russian religious dissent was well received and developed further in Soviet historiography, which favored the investigations of the "base," that is underlying class relations in the society, over the study of the "superstructure," i.e. culture, religion, ideology, institutions, etc. Religious dissent in seventeenth-century Russia fit especially well into Friedrich Engels' idea of a "religious screen."<sup>12</sup> Understandably, there were

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<sup>8</sup> N.F. Kapterev, *Patriarkh Nikon i ego protivniki v delakh ispravleniia tserkovnykh obriadov*, v. 1 (Moscow: Universitetskaiia Tipografiia (M. Katkov), 1887); Idem., *Patriarkh Nikon i tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich*, 2 vols. (Sergiev Posad: Tipografiia Sviato-Troitskoi Sergievoi Lavry, 1909); E.E. Golubinskii, *K nashei polemike so staroobriadtsami* (Sergiev Posad: 2-ia Tipografiia A. I. Snegirevoi, 1892).

<sup>9</sup> A.P. Shchapov, *Russkii raskol staroobriadchestva, rassmatrivaemyi v sviazi s vnutrennim sostoianiem russkoi tserkvi i grazhdanstvennosti v XVII veke i v pervoi polovine XVIII* (Kazan: Izdanie knigoprodavtsa Ivana Dubrovina, 1859), 464.

<sup>10</sup> On Shchapov's intellectual evolution: V.V. Molzinskii, *Ocherki russkoi dorevoliutsionnoi istoriografii*, 212-213.

<sup>11</sup> A.P. Shchapov, *Zemstvo i raskol*, vol. 1 (St. Petersburg: Tipografiia Tovarishchestva "Obshchestvennaia pol'za," 1862), 28. See also the works of other scholars who followed in his footsteps: V.V. Andreev, *Raskol i ego znachenie v narodnoi russkoi istorii* (St. Petersburg: Tipografiia M. Khana, 1870); I.I. Iuzov (Kablits), *Russkie dissidenty. Starovery i dukhovnye khristiane* (St. Petersburg: Tipografiia A. M. Kotomina, 1881); S.P. Melgunov, *Staroobriadtsy i svoboda sovesti: Istoricheskii ocherk* (Moscow: Tipografiia G. Lissnera i D. Sobko, 1907); Idem., *Moscow i staraia vera* ([Moscow]: [1910]); Idem., *Velikii podvizhnik protopop Avvakum* (Moscow: Tovarishchestvo I. D. Sytina, 1907), and others.

<sup>12</sup> It meant in particular that the religious component in the Middle Ages and later, in the Early Modern era, was no more than a "screen" for the basic class struggle: "In the so-called religious wars of the Sixteenth Century, very positive material class-interests were at play, and those wars were class wars just as were the later collisions in England and France. If the class struggles of that time appear to bear religious earmarks, if the interests, requirements, and

no major attempts to reevaluate the mainstream class oriented interpretation of the “Schism” up to the very end of the Soviet period; however, Old Believer studies continued to advance even within the rigid scheme of Marxist historiography.<sup>13</sup>

### *Culture, Politics, and Society*

The interest in the history of the Russian “Schism” was revitalized starting from the end of the 1950s on both sides of the Atlantic. In the US, the descendants of emigres from revolutionary Russia, Serge A. Zenkovsky (1907-1990) and Michael Cherniavsky (1920-1972), laid the foundation for modern American scholarship of the Old Belief. Zenkovsky’s works in many ways reinvigorated Kapterev’s findings: the view of the conflict as a clash of worldviews, as well as the importance of Muscovy’s imperial agenda in Nikon’s changes. Notwithstanding, he significantly advanced the historiography of the Old Belief by proposing to view this phenomenon not through the prism of backwardness or progress, but through a more neutral lens of culture. In particular, Zenkovsky tried to explain mid-seventeenth century events from the point of view of their participants, and understand the logic of the followers and opponents of the reform, instead of glorifying some and accusing others.<sup>14</sup>

Michael Cherniavsky, for his part, confronted the past and modern historiography of the Old Belief and proposed a novel approach to the problem of religious dissent in Russia. Drawing

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demands of the various classes hid themselves behind a *religious screen*, it little changes the actual situation, and is to be explained by conditions of the time” (Frederick Engels, *The Peasant War in Germany* (New-York: International publishers, 1926), 51). Engels further explained that in those periods the church honored existing social relations, and as a result “all general and overt attacks on feudalism, in the first place attacks on the church, all revolutionary, social and political doctrines, necessarily became theological heresies” (*Ibid.*, 52.).

<sup>13</sup> P.G. Ryndziunskii, “Staroobriadcheskaia organizatsiia v usloviakh razvitiia promyshlennogo kapitalizma,” in *Voprosy istorii religii i ateizma: sbornik statei* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Akademii nauk SSSR, 1950), 188-248; V.G. Kartsov, *Religiozni raskol kak forma antifeodal'nogo protesta v istorii Rossii*, 2 vols. (Kalinin: Kalininskii gosudarstvennyi universitet, 1971); V.F. Milovidov, *Staroobriadchestvo v proshlom i nastoiashchem* (Moscow: Mysl', 1969); V.S. Rumiantseva, *Narodnoe antitserkovnoe dvizhenie v Rossii v XVII veke* (Moscow: Nauka, 1986), and others.

<sup>14</sup> Serge A. Zenkovsky, “The Russian Church Schism: Its Background and Repercussions,” *Russian Review*, vol. 16, no. 4 (Oct., 1957), 37-58. See also: Idem, *Russkoe staroobriadchestvo: Dukhovnye dvizheniia XVII veka* (Munchen: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1970).

from the studies in Western European history, particularly from the work of his graduate advisor at the University of California, Berkeley, Ernst Kantorowicz, Cherniavsky proposed viewing the Russian “Schism” through a prism of “political theology,” i.e. as political ideas intertwined in theological form.<sup>15</sup> The “Schism,” Cherniavsky argued, in its core was a reaction of the masses to the secularization of the Russian state rapidly unfolding since the second half the seventeenth century. In that period, just like its Western European counterparts, the Muscovite theocratic monarchy was transforming into a secular absolutist state, and the Old Believers remained outside of it.<sup>16</sup>

Cherniavsky’s PhD student at the University of Chicago, Robert O. Crummey (born 1936), took a new step in the study of the Old Belief. Crummey did not follow his teacher’s ardor for the political dimension of the history of the “Schism”; instead, he preferred to examine the Old Belief through the prism of sociology of religion. Using the famous Vyg hermitage in Russia’s North as a case study, he investigated social structure of the Old Believer community, its economic activities, and relationship with the outside world.<sup>17</sup> Crummey concluded that the Old Believers were able to succeed in a hostile society thanks to their status as “pariahs” (Max Weber’s term): that meant that the Old Believers “could afford to conduct their affairs impersonally and rationally

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<sup>15</sup> Michael Cherniavsky, “The Old Believers and the New Religion,” *Slavic Review*, vol. 25, no. 1 (Mar., 1966), 1-39. See also: Ernst H. Kantorowicz, *The Two King’s Bodies: A Study in Medieval Political Theology* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1957). It is significant to note that Kantorowicz himself gave rather vague definition of the notion of “political theology:” “It is mainly by our legal sources that the new ways of exchange between the spiritual and the secular become evident. After all, the Canonists used and applied Roman Law; the Civilians used and applied Canon Law; and both Laws were used also by Common Law jurists. Moreover, both Laws were influenced by scholastic method and thought, as well as by Aristotelian philosophy; finally, the jurists of all branches of Law applied freely, and without scruples or inhibitions, theological metaphors and similes when expounding their points of view in glosses and legal opinions. Under the impact of those exchanges between canon and civilian glossators and commentators - all but non-existent in the earlier Middle Ages - something came into being which then was called ‘Mysteries of State’, and which today in a more generalizing sense is often termed ‘Political Theology’.” Ernst H. Kantorowicz, “Mysteries of State: An Absolutist Conception and Its Late Medieval Origins,” in *The Harvard Theological Review*, vol. 48, no. 1 (Jan., 1955), 66-67.

<sup>16</sup> Michael Cherniavsky, “The Old Believers and the New Religion,” 36.

<sup>17</sup> Robert O. Crummey, *Old Believers and the World of Antichrist: The Vyg Community and the Russian State, 1694-1855* (Madison, University of Wisconsin Press, 1970).

and seize whatever advantages their resources and their opportunities offered them.”<sup>18</sup>

Meanwhile in the Soviet Union, discouraged by the rigidity of Marxist historiosophy, many historians turned from explanatory models towards meticulous analysis and publication of massive numbers of archival documents. Consequently, in the 1960-80's in Moscow, St. Petersburg, Novosibirsk, and Ekaterinburg scholarly centers studying the literary tradition of the Old Belief arose and flourished.<sup>19</sup> These centers issued numerous works on Old Believer authors and their writings, as well as on specific aspects of the dissenters' history and teaching. In 1974 Nikolai Pokrovskii, the founder of the Novosibirsk scholarly center, published arguably the most important work on the history of the Old Belief attempted in the Soviet period.<sup>20</sup> His study focused on the “anti-feudal struggle” of the peasant “schismatics” in the Urals and Siberia throughout the eighteenth century. Even though the general interpretative framework of the book followed the existing Marxist canon, its greatest contribution lay in the change of the focus of study itself. Pokrovskii turned his attention to the worldview of simple dissident believers on the Russian empire's periphery and their everyday resistance to the oppressive autocratic state. He employed a vast number of judicial cases from civic and church institutions dedicated to the implementation of the censuses of population in Siberia and the Urals, the administration of loyalty oaths, as well as the cases of self-immolation among local dissident peasantry. Pokrovskii drew two remarkable and acutely important conclusions from his investigation. First, he argued that as a phenomenon the Old Belief (he uses the common for Russian historiography term *staroobriadchestvo*, or Old Ritualism) is so heterogeneous, that “the studying of the whole movement as a single undivided

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<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 135-137.

<sup>19</sup> See works of Natalia S. Demkova, Nataliia V. Ponyrko, Nikolai Iu. Bubnov, Nikolai N. Pokrovskii, Elena K. Romodanovskaia, Natalia S. Gurianova, Anatolii T. Shashkov, and many others. See also an account on Novosibirsk school in: Robert O. Crummey, “The Novosibirsk School of Old Believer Studies,” in Idem., *Old Believers in a Changing World*, 167-189.

<sup>20</sup> N.N. Pokrovskii, *Antifeodal'nyi protest uralo-sibirskikh krest'ian-staroobriadtsev v XVIII veke* (Novosibirsk: Nauka, 1974).



concept is ineffective.”<sup>21</sup> Second, Pokrovskii concluded that in practice throughout the eighteenth century the division between the religious dissent and the official Orthodoxy was “blurred, diluted, variable.”<sup>22</sup> He dubbed this phenomenon with the term “double belief” (*dvoeverie*).<sup>23</sup>

### *Cultural Turn*

Inspired by existing internal developments and trends in the historiography of Western Europe, in the 1990s students of the Russian Old Belief predominantly turned towards its cultural aspects. Robert Crummey became a pioneer in this “cultural turn.” Borrowing productively from the works of anthropologists, first of all Clifford Geertz and Victor Turner, and his fellow historians, Crummey attempted to reexamine the Old Belief from the point of view of “popular religion” - a concept well developed by the students of Medieval and Early Modern Europe.<sup>24</sup> Instead of looking at social and political roots and implications of the “Schism,” Crummey now proposed to look at the beliefs and practices inside the dissident communities. His approach was very well received in the field of Early Modern Russia; the notion of “textual community,” which Crummey adopted from the works of the medievalist Brian Stock, became especially popular in current studies.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 158.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 358; Idem., “Organizatsiia ucheta staroobriadtsev v Sibiri v XVIII veke,” in *Russkoe naselenie Pomor'ia i Sibiri. Period feodalizma* (Moscow: Nauka, 1973), 393. Pokrovskii's use of the concept “double belief” is not conventional for the studies of Russian history and does not refer to the “survivals of paganism.” About discussion on “double belief” in historiography see in: Eve Levin, “Dvoeverie and Popular Religion,” in *Seeking God: The Recovery of Religious Identity in Orthodox Russia, Ukraine, and Georgia*, ed. by Stephen K. Batalden (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1993), 29-52; A.S. Lavrov, *Koldovstvo i religiia v Rossii. 1700-1740 gg.* (Moscow: Drevlekhranilishche, 2000), 75-88; V.M. Zhivov, “Dvoeverie i osobyi kharakter russkoi kul'turnoi istorii,” in Idem., *Razyskaniia v oblasti istorii i predystorii russkoi kultury* (Moscow: Iazyki Slavianskikh Kultur, 2002), 306-316; Stella Rock, *Popular Religion in Russia: 'Double Belief' and the Making of an Ancient Myth* (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), esp. ch. 3.

<sup>24</sup> Robert O. Crummey, “Old Belief as Popular Religion,” in *Slavic Review*, vol. 52, no. 4 (Winter, 1993), 700-712 (see also recent publication in: Idem., *Old Believers in a Changing World*, 17-27); Idem., “The Origins of the Old Believers' Cultural Systems: The Works of Avraamii,” in *Forschungen zur osteuropaischen Geschichte*, 50 (1995), 121-138.

<sup>25</sup> Brian Stock, *The Implications of Literacy: Written Language and Models of Interpretation in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1983), 90-92; Clifford Geertz, “Religion as a Cultural System,” in Idem., *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New-York: Basic Books, 1973), 87-124.

In more recent scholarship of the Old Belief, perhaps the most influential works are written by Georg B. Michels and Aleksandr Lavrov, both of whom revised the established interpretations of the Russian “Schism.” Several characteristics unite both authors. First, Michels and Lavrov are heavily influenced by “anthropological turn” in history that resulted in the “democratization” of their object of study: both authors tend to favor the study of practices, beliefs, and attitudes of simple people instead of Old Believer leaders and their writings. Second, both combine extensive archival research with implementation of contemporary theoretical frameworks, resulting in compelling works of scholarship.

Michels focuses mostly on the early history of the Old Belief - from the period of its dawn in the mid-seventeenth century until, as he puts it, the “routinization” of the Old Belief at the beginning of the eighteenth century. In contrast with the traditional view that Patriarch Nikon’s changes in the liturgical practices of the Russian Church provoked a mass movement of opposition organized by disobedient clergy, Michels argues that Russian society “remained largely indifferent” towards the reforms Nikon introduced into the Church.<sup>26</sup> However, the protests against the Church that occurred in the period of Nikon’s patriarchate were a reaction against his struggle with “popular religiosity.”<sup>27</sup> Consequently, the development of Old Belief should be analyzed in the context of disciplining and unifying efforts the Russian Church authorities undertook after the

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The anthropologist Aleksandr L’vov legitimately noted in his recent study that Crummey’s model of “textual community” “coincides with the Stock’s concept [of textual community] only in name.” Crummey’s interpretation implies “community united by literacy,” i.e. it formed around a literate elite; while Stock speaks about “textuality,” which means that community united by texts and their interpretation among its members without any control from the side of literate people. Consequently, through Crummey’s work researchers of Old Belief adopted a wrong understanding of the “textual community,” which led to futility in its application. A.L. L’vov, *Sokha i piatknizhie: Russkie iudeistvuiushchie kak tekstualnoe soobshchestvo* (St. Petersburg: Izdatel’stvo Evropeiskogo Universiteta v Sankt-Peterburge, 2011), 57-60.

<sup>26</sup> Georg B. Michels, *At War with the Church: Religious Dissent in Seventeenth-Century Russia* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 63.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 21-45.

Moscow Church Council of 1666-1667.<sup>28</sup> Michels's conclusion about the nature of the "Schism" in the late seventeenth century is remarkably insightful: "Instead of one great schism, one should probably refer to numerous small schisms that occurred in particular monasteries, parishes, and communities and involved individual monks, nuns, priests, and laymen."<sup>29</sup> At the same time, Michels convincingly argues that the view privileging the role of the correction of books in sparking dissent was established only at the beginning of the eighteenth century. He attributes to this period the so-called "routinization" (Max Weber's term) of the Russian "Schism," which was accomplished thanks to Semen Denisov and his historical account called *The Russian Vineyard* (*Vinograd Rossiiskii*).<sup>30</sup>

For his part, Aleksandr Lavrov also speaks about the disciplining practices, however, unlike Michels, he is concerned with the secularized state and its attempts to control its own subjects, rather than on the Church's ways to improve ecclesiastical control. Borrowing from the extensive scholarship on the European Reformation, Lavrov attempts to contextualize Russia's religiosity and confessional policies in a wider framework of European early modernity. At the beginning of the eighteenth century, Lavrov argues, a process of "social disciplining" (Gerhard Oestreich's term) occurred in Russia. In particular, Tsar Peter in his reformist policies strove to make Russians into subjects of a "police state," living and acting "regularly." The church structure became one of the key instruments in this process, because the authority of the Church reached to the bottom of society through the ramified network of parishes and local clergy.<sup>31</sup> The

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<sup>28</sup> Michels, *At War with the Church*, ch. 4-5. See also: Idem., "The Solovki Uprising: Religion and Revolt in Northern Russia," in *Russian Review*, vol. 51, no. 1 (Jan., 1992), 1-15; Idem., "The First Old Believers in Ukraine: Observations about Their Social Profile and Behavior," in *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*, vol. 16, no. 3/4 (Dec., 1992), 289-313; Idem., "The Violent Old Belief: An Examination of Religious Dissent on the Karelian Frontier," *Russian History/Histoire Russe*, vol. 1, nos. 1-4 (1992), 203-229.

<sup>29</sup> Michels, *At War with the Church*, 223.

<sup>30</sup> Idem., "The First Old Believers in Tradition and Historical Reality," in *Jahrbucher fur Geschichte Osteuropas*, vol. 41, no. 4 (1993), 481-508.

<sup>31</sup> Lavrov, *Koldovstvo i religiia v Rossii*, 345-347.

implementation of social discipline, Lavrov continues, fostered in Russia the process of confessionalization of distinct Orthodox, Old Believer, and sectarian “religious cultures” (Natalie Zemon Davis’s term), each consisting of a set of diverse beliefs and practices.<sup>32</sup>

The given short review of historiography of the “Schism” has only touched the peak of the ever-growing iceberg; academic interest in the topic is far from being exhausted.<sup>33</sup> Numerous notable Old Believer writers and writings still remain in obscurity, while countless archival documents are yet to be examined by historians. However, in this study I propose to change the conversation about the “Schism” altogether, instead of adding a new interpretation to the stack of existing ones. This dissertation turns to the concepts of “Schism” and “schismatic” themselves.

The drawback of the historiography of the “Schism”/Old Belief is that it combines several diverse visions of the past: on the one hand, the hostile church and state anti-“schismatic” discourses of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, which gave birth and developed the concept of the “Schism”; and on the other hand, the self-descriptive narrative of the people who opposed Nikon’s “innovations” and often identified themselves as Old Believers (*starovery*) and their vision of Orthodoxy as Old Belief (*staraia vera*). Such prolific dissident ecclesiastical writers as archpriest Avvakum Petrov (1620-1682) or Denisov brothers from the Vyg community, were

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 39-41. See also: Natalie Zemon Davis, “From ‘Popular Religion’ to Religious Cultures,” in *Reformation Europe: A Guide to Research*, ed. by Steven Ozment (St. Louis: Center for Reformation Research, 1982), 321-341.

<sup>33</sup> See some of other noteworthy works left out from the review: Nickolas Lupinin, *Religious Revolt in the XVIIIth Century: The Schism of the Russian Church* (Princeton, N.J.: Kingston Press, 1984); Roy R. Robson, *Old Believers in Modern Russia* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1995); Irina Paert, *Old Believers: Religious Dissent and Gender in Russia, 1760-1850* (Manchester, UK; New York, NY: Manchester University Press, 2003); V.V. Kerov, *‘Se chelovek i delo ego...’: Konfessionalno-eticheskie faktory staroobriadcheskogo predprinimatelstva v Rossii* (Moscow: Ekon-inform, 2004); E.M. Iukhimenko, *Literaturnoe nasledie Vygovskogo staroobriadcheskogo obshchestva*, t. 1-2 (Moscow: Iazyki Slavianskikh Kultur, 2008); Manfred Hildermeier, “Old Belief and Worldly Performance: Socioeconomic and Sociocultural Aspects of the Raskol in Early Industrial Russia,” in *Russia’s Dissident Old Believers, 1650-1950*, ed. by Georg B. Michels and Robert L. Nichols (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota, 2009), to name a few. The study of local Old Believer communities has also flourishing in recent decades.

active creators of the latter.<sup>34</sup> As a result, historians treat the concepts of “Schism” and Old Belief as synonyms, referring essentially to the same signified - dissent in the Russian Church. Even worse, these concepts are treated as categories of analysis, adequate signifiers for the opposition to Nikon’s liturgical changes since the mid-seventeenth century onward, even though they came into being long after Nikon and were the result of very specific historical settings. Such historiographic practice makes the task of establishing who was and who was not a “schismatic”/Old Believer/Old Ritualist (*staroobriadets*) prescriptive and often misleading. Georg Michels, for instance, attempted to differentiate true “Old Believers,” such as the archpriest Avvakum and the deacon Fedor, from numerous “dissenters” and “dissidents,” i.e. “opponents of the Nikonian reforms, who did not define themselves as Old Believers or did not profess allegiance to Old Belief texts or teachers.”<sup>35</sup> It is difficult to characterize Michels’s attempt as successful, since instead of clarifying the issue it made the classification of Nikon’s opponents even more confusing.

Thus, this dissertation takes the concepts of “Schism” and “schismatic” themselves as the object of investigation: it studies the state and church authorities’ struggle to figure out how to identify dissenters, and how to categorize them within the intensely bureaucratic structures of the modernizing Russian state. I do not strive to reconstruct the “reality” the church and state rhetoric masked, or determine with certainty who among the seventeenth-century Muscovites really was a “schismatic” and who was simply mistaken about the rituals due to excusable ignorance. Neither do I intend to disprove the accusations the church hierarchs and state officials made against the

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<sup>34</sup> On the impact of Vyg community leaders’ historical writings in the historiography see: Georg B. Michels, “The First Old Believers in Tradition and Historical Reality,” 481-508. On the principal differences in various narratives of the “Schism” and Old Belief see: Evgeny Grishin, “The Origins of the Old Belief in Viatka: A Conceptual Problem,” *Canadian-American Slavic Studies*, vol. 51, no. 1 (2017), 105-121.

<sup>35</sup> Michels, *At War with the Church*, 18.

people they viewed as dissenters. Instead, this dissertation aims to investigate the language of religious polemic and state legalist discourse as a reality-forming device, as a means to comprehend, explain, and act in reaction to the unraveling events in Russian society. My primary interest lies in the understanding of the past on its own terms in an attempt to provide an explanation for change in history and to reveal the means through which change occurs.

### Primary Sources

In order to draw a comprehensive picture of the changes in the church and state discourses of the “Schism” throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, I employ numerous religious tracts, legal documents, correspondence, and cases of judicial prosecution, collected over years of research in Russian central and local archives and libraries.<sup>36</sup> The amount and diversity of the documents this dissertation draws upon enabled in-depth investigation of the concepts of “Schism” and “schismatic” as they were practiced in Early Modern Russia.

The investigation of the seventeenth-century discussion about the new liturgical books is primarily based on ecclesiastical documents. Champions and opponents of the changes produced numerous polemical tracts with sophisticated arguments and extensive evidence from authoritative texts. Some of these tracts supplemented the new books; others were published in stand-alone

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<sup>36</sup> In particular, I have investigated documents of the central state and church institutions from the Russian State Archive of Ancient Acts (*Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv drevnikh aktov*, or RGADA) in Moscow and the Russian State Historical Archive (*Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi istoricheskii arkhiv*, or RGIA) in St. Petersburg. The State Archive of Kirov Region (*Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Kirovskoi oblasti*, or GAKO) has provided me with numerous judicial cases carried out by local civil and ecclesiastical institutions of Viatka province. Thanks to Russian State Library (*Rossiiskaia gosudarstvennaia biblioteka*, or RGB) and the library of Trinity Lavra of St. Sergius (*Troitse-Sergieva Lavra*), which digitalized and made available online most of their ancient manuscript and old-printed book collection, I had an access to many religious tracts essential for my research. Last but not least, I also relied on numerous collections of primary sources published over the last two centuries, such as *Polnoe sobranie zakonov Rossiiskoi imperii (PSZ)*, 45 vols. (St. Petersburg: v Tipografii II otdeleniia Sobstvennoi Ego Imperatorskago Velichestva Kantseliarii, 1830) or *Materialy dlia istorii raskola za pervoe vremia ego sushchestvovaniia, izdavaemye Bratstvom sv. Petra mitropolita*, ed. by N.I. Subbotin, vols. 1-9 (Moscow: Tipografiia E. Lissner i Iu. Roman, 1875-1895).

editions or survived in manuscript form. These documents are decidedly biased by their very nature and should be treated accordingly – as historic evidence, not testaments to truth or error. They give us an understanding of the type of ecclesiastical issues that were at stake in the second half of the seventeenth century and provide invaluable insight about the contrasting perspectives on Russian Orthodoxy, order, spiritual authority, and apprehension of religious change.

The legislation of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries is another important object of analysis in the dissertation. For the seventeenth century quite a few decrees, mostly credited to the sole source of legislative authority in the state, the Russian tsar, concerned church dissent. These decrees had a very bold message – the direct physical extermination of the dissenters. The rapid bureaucratization of the country started at the beginning of the eighteenth century and the continually expanding mechanisms of social control increased the number of such sources manifold: numerous civil and ecclesiastical institutions of various levels issued hundreds of decrees and orders administering “schismatic” affairs. Again, I do not treat the legislation as a source of factual information about the church dissidents, but as a testament of the state’s perspective on social and religious order in Russia.

Finally, this dissertation utilizes hundreds of the eighteenth-century judicial cases dealing with the “Schism” in the Viatka province. They contain crucial factual information about the everyday life and beliefs of the religious dissenters caught up in the bureaucratic machine of the Russian empire. The judicial cases consist of numerous commands, reports, petitions, reminders, and resolutions moving back and forth between hierarchically organized institutions. These documents are highly formulaic, legalist, and repetitive. They meticulously observe the state’s legal regime and unquestionably conform to the hierarchical order of state institutions.

Judicial cases are treated with extreme caution in this research. It is important to stress that Russian judicial system of the eighteenth century was a subsidiary of the executive power, not an independent branch of government. In addition to resolving conflicts between the subjects, provincial judicial institutions policed the local populace, enforcing civil and ecclesiastical regulations and carrying out executions. This means that these documents reflect first and foremost people's interactions with the state; thanks to its intrusive character, we can learn much about Russian empire's subjects, yet we can only see what was visible and, importantly, of interest to the state agents. I analyze the judicial cases with this consideration in mind.

I chose the region of Viatka as a case study for several reasons. Traditionally, historians have concentrated their research on "classical" sites of the Old Belief, for example the Vyg community in Northern Russia or the Preobrazhenskoe community in Moscow. In addition, well-known dissident leaders and intellectuals, such as archpriest Avvakum, or the Denisov brothers, have sustained considerable study. Choosing Viatka for my study, I focus on a non-"classical" region, and on people cloaked in silence because they were illiterate or never wrote down their thoughts. Even more significant is the fact that Viatka peasants in general and the so-called "schismatics" among them in particular were very active in defending their rights and liberties against the state and church agents. Due to this fact surprisingly large numbers of records crucial for my research survived in local and central archives.

## **Methodology**

Modern scholars can read the sources produced in the period of early modernity without overly extensive preparation, yet their full understanding is a matter of meticulous study - the cultural and even psychological gap between *us*, modern people, and *them*, people of the sixteenth,



seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries, is overwhelming. Therefore, the critique of early modern sources requires very sophisticated tools. Equally important is theoretical understanding of the object of study. As Reinhart Koselleck justly noted, “that which makes a history into the historical cannot be derived from the sources alone: a theory of possible history is required so that the sources might be brought to speak at all.”<sup>37</sup>

In the most general sense, this dissertation can be classified as a work of conceptual history. First of all, it follows the practice of historical research developed by the Cambridge school of conceptual history, which in its turn has its intellectual roots in the works of ordinary language philosophers Ludwig Wittgenstein and John L. Austin.<sup>38</sup> The Cambridge school, developed in the works of Quentin Skinner, John Pocock and others, deals with the synchronic analysis of language (primarily political language): it focuses on the linguistic context in which concepts operate. Skinner particularly highlights two principles on which the analysis of this school of thought rests: “[the] performativity of texts and the need to treat them intertextually.”<sup>39</sup> This means that words should not always be treated as mere bits of information, verbal messages, but often viewed as actions (performative utterances or speech acts). Similarly, composing texts and making them public can also be perceived as doing, or acting by the means of writing. Intertextuality, in its turn, refers to the fact that no text can occur in a vacuum, independently of the existing “intellectual contexts and frameworks.” Ultimately, Skinner argues, the task of a historian is to view the past through the eyes of the people of the time, “to see things their way.”<sup>40</sup>

The Cambridge school methodology plays a tremendously important role for the analysis

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<sup>37</sup> Reinhart Koselleck, *Future Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time*, transl. by Keith Tribe (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1985), 155.

<sup>38</sup> See, for example, their classical philosophical works: Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1953); John L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962).

<sup>39</sup> Quentin Skinner, *Visions of Politics. Vol. I: Regarding Method* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), vii.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

of primary sources in this dissertation. In particular, it allows approaching polemical tracts and bureaucratic documents in a new way. First, it acknowledges the fact that the texts of religious polemics were not simply sophisticated arguments about who understands Orthodoxy correctly and who is in error, but shaped the way people viewed the world around them and, thus, directly affected social reality. For instance, participants in the debates about Nikon's changes in the church rituals frequently resorted to biblical and patristic quotations, parallels, and, metaphors. This fact is not at all surprising since it was an ecclesiastical polemic over religious issues. Sometimes, readers have taken this material to be mere rhetoric, veiling a mundane drive for wealth and power. For example, like many of his fellow historians Georg Michels essentially rehashes Friedrich Engels's idea of a "religious screen" veiling class struggle in the past.<sup>41</sup> Michels particularly states that "in many cases, the religious rhetoric merely served to camouflage non-religious priorities, such as the exercise of arbitrary personal power or the accumulation of great wealth. In other cases, especially in matters involving obedience to episcopal authority, the same rhetoric might be used to justify harsh repression against harmless offenders such as negligent churchgoers."<sup>42</sup> Michels treats the works of religious polemics in his numerous and highly influential works accordingly.

This interpretation of religious language is certainly justified if we look at church history from social and economic perspectives. Yet, this view overly simplifies the role of language. The choice of one type of quotations and metaphors over others suggests that polemicists conceptualized the events in the Church into a certain direction, provided the scene for these events and assigned the role to the participants as they desired them to be viewed. Therefore, the so-called "rhetoric" clearly demonstrates how the polemical writers wished the reader to interpret reality,

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<sup>41</sup> Frederick Engels, *The Peasant War in Germany*, 51.

<sup>42</sup> Georg B. Michels, "Ruling Without Mercy: Seventeenth-Century Russian Bishops and Their Officials," in *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, vol. 4, no. 3 (Summer, 2003), 542.

and in this manner, they shaped it. An analysis of this language allows us to see more clearly the intentions of the author, or, as Quentin Skinner put it, “what he may have intended to do *by* writing in a certain way.”<sup>43</sup>

The performativity of texts is even more pronounced in legislation and bureaucratic documents. The issuing of laws by definition assumes an action, an order that is to be executed. Similarly, judicial cases, petitions, and administrative orders, originating from or directed towards hierarchically organized institutions, had specific legal implications and were backed by the might of the entire Russian imperial bureaucratic machine. Therefore, when Viatka province officers attended to “schismatic” affairs or local peasants petitioned the provincial office with complaints or requests, they propelled into action an intricate mechanism of state power. Thus, these dry, repetitive and highly formulaic documents should be accessed not solely as a source of factual information about the past, but even more as an evidence of state power functioning by way of language.

Alongside the Cambridge school, equally important for this dissertation is its German counterpart – the school of conceptual history associated with Reinhart Koselleck and known as *Begriffsgeschichte*. Unlike the more pragmatic Cambridge school, *Begriffsgeschichte* is more than an approach to source analysis, a way to make them speak, but a whole school of thought that aims at the understanding of historical time.<sup>44</sup> By analyzing concepts, particularly “an inescapable, irreplaceable part of the political and social vocabulary,” such as family, state, revolution, progress, etc.,<sup>45</sup> it strives to grasp historical changes semantically. In other words,

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<sup>43</sup> Quentin Skinner, “Motives, Intentions and the Interpretation of Texts,” in *New Literary History*, vol. 3, no. 2: On Interpretation: I (Winter, 1972), 403.

<sup>44</sup> “Historical time, if the concept has a specific meaning, is bound up with social and political actions, with concretely acting and suffering human beings and their institutions and organizations. All have definite, internalized forms of conduct, each with a peculiar temporal rhythm.” Reinhart Koselleck, *Future Past*, xxii.

<sup>45</sup> Idem., “A Response to Comments on the *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*,” in *The Meaning of Historical Terms and Concepts: New Studies on Begriffsgeschichte*, ed. by Hartmut Lehmann and Melvin Richter (Washington, D.C.:

*Begriffsgeschichte* is concerned with a diachronic dimension of language – persistence, change and novelty in the history of the concepts.<sup>46</sup> Thus conceived, the concept is a point where the “space of experience” connects with the “horizon of expectation,” or where the past and future meet.<sup>47</sup>

Notwithstanding the apparent philosophical intricacies of the German school’s approach that makes it less susceptible to implementation, its use in the study of the “Schism” yields undeniable fruits.<sup>48</sup> In particular, it allows identification of changes and tracing continuity in the development of the concepts under investigation. That is especially important for the deciphering early modern ecclesiastical discourse that may seem static at first glance due to the relatively stable set of biblical and patristic references. For instance, the contested notion of *ispravlenie* (correction), designating the mid-seventeenth-century changes in the liturgical books that sparked the dissent, can hardly be understood outside of the context of temporality.

Last but not least, this dissertation has an important human dimension. It is expressed in several methodological approaches employed in the research. First of all, microhistory. The founder of this approach, Carlo Ginzburg, admitted that he derived inspirations for his work in this direction from Leo Tolstoy’s “War and Peace.” As Ginzburg wrote, it instilled in him the “conviction that a historical phenomenon can become comprehensible only by reconstructing the activities of all the persons who participated in it,” no matter how small and insignificant these persons seem to us on the scale of world history.<sup>49</sup> In practice it means that an historian’s focus

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German Historical Institute, 1996), 64.

<sup>46</sup> Koselleck, *Future Past*, 82-83.

<sup>47</sup> On the difference between the two schools see the published discussion between its founders and practitioners: *The Meaning of Historical Terms and Concepts*, esp. 52, 63-64.

<sup>48</sup> Georg Michels is a pioneer in employing *Begriffsgeschichte* for the study of the concept of “Schism.” Georg Michels, *At War with the Church*, ch. 3.

<sup>49</sup> Carlo Ginzburg, “Microhistory: Two or Three Things I Know about It,” in Idem., *Threads and Traces: True. False.*

should be on very specific people, their day-to-day actions and particular beliefs, and not on depersonalized social groups and abstract trends in their history. Consequently, the primary sources are to be examined with the idea of real human beings in mind and at micro scale, i.e. with attention to details and traces. This dissertation makes an attempt to follow in this path.

Secondly, this research assumes the agency of studied individuals. In other words, historical actors are not taken in this dissertation as mere subjects of top-down oppression, but as active interpreters and participants in power relations themselves. I am especially keen on the works of sociologist Michel de Certeau, who stressed the inalienable transformative power that ordinary individuals have as consumers of culture, and anthropologist James Scott, who productively analyzed the weaponry in the arsenal of even the weakest members of oppressive states.<sup>50</sup> Consequently, this dissertation treats language and power as devices approachable by all actors on the historical stage - imperial rulers, administrators, clerics, and repressed subjects known as “schismatics” alike.

Finally, this dissertation research takes people’s religious beliefs seriously. Recently, historian Brad Gregory, an advocate of a special, religious approach to religion, exemplified this, using the example of the phenomenon of martyrdom during the European Reformation.<sup>51</sup> As he put it, many Protestants, Anabaptists and Catholics did not die for being artisans or bourgeois, but rather for their beliefs in a certain type of religious message. “Martyrs endured persecution, torture, and death because they believed that scriptural injunctions and promises, plus the underlying view of reality that they implied and presupposed, were true.”<sup>52</sup> Thus, religion should be taken seriously.

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*Fictive* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 204-205.

<sup>50</sup> Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. by Steven Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984); James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985).

<sup>51</sup> Brad S. Gregory, *Salvation at Stake: Christian Martyrdom in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999).

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 110.

Certainly, plenty of theological tractates were and are written and read, and people were and are ready to die and kill for their own religious convictions. Consequently, these convictions should be part of the explanation of the phenomena of the past and present.

The dissertation consists of three chronologically organized parts. Throughout all of them I argue that the meaning of the concept of “Schism” changed dramatically over the decades and centuries following its inception. What started in the seventeenth century as the language of ecclesiastical ostracism and stigmatization (Part I) by the beginning of the eighteenth century had transformed into the language of social order and discipline (Part II). From the mid-eighteenth century the concept of “Schism” was linked directly to the doctrine of religious toleration, which the Russian elite adopted from the European Enlightenment. Thus, the more neutral concept of “Old Ritualism” (*staroobriadchestvo*) came into being (Part III). Parts II and III also vividly demonstrate that the history of the denunciation of the dissenters is not just a story of the exercise of subjugation in Foucauldian sense; on the contrary, the dissenters were active appropriators of the discourse of the “Schism” themselves. The so-called “schismatics” were able to turn the language of exclusion and persecution into a way to manifest their social rights and religious liberties. If language is a weapon, in practice it is a double-edged one.

## **PART I. “Correction” and “Schism” in Seventeenth-Century Russia**

### **CHAPTER I. The “Reforms” of Patriarch Nikon and the Clerics’ Protest**

In 1652, the ambitious archbishop of Novgorod, Nikon, was named patriarch of Moscow and all of Russia. Over the next several years, the new patriarch revised the liturgical practice of the Russian Orthodox Church. The changes Nikon introduced included such seemingly symbolic alterations as the replacement of the imprint on the Communion bread (prosphora): the Greek-style cross, with one vertical and one horizontal bar, both of the same length, took place of the traditional Russian Orthodox cross, with one vertical and three horizontal bars. In addition, believers were obliged to make a three-finger sign of the cross instead of the two-finger sign used before. At the end of the psalms in the church service, “Alleluia” was repeated three times instead of two. Finally, the single “i” (Isus/*Icyc*) in the name of Jesus was replaced with double “i” (Iisus/*Iucyc*). These and hundreds of other changes were accompanied by printing and dissemination of new liturgical books.<sup>53</sup>

The mid-seventeenth-century modification of the liturgical practice of the Russian Church became known in the historiography as the “Patriarch Nikon’s reforms.” It is universally acknowledged that Nikon aimed to bring Russian liturgical practice into conformity with the one in the Greek Orthodox Church, which he considered to be the most authoritative in doctrinal and liturgical questions. For this reason, he decided to revise all the books in use in the Russian Church, based on the model of the contemporary Greek Orthodox liturgical books.<sup>54</sup> Already in the process of the implementation, Nikon’s actions spurred protests among some clerics that later grew into a

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<sup>53</sup> For a nuanced analysis of the changes in the context of liturgical evolution, see: Paul Meyendorff, *Russia, Ritual, and Reform: The Liturgical Reforms of Nikon in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century* (Crestwood: St. Vladimir’s Press, 1991); B.P. Kutuzov, *Tserkovnaia "reforma" XVII veka kak ideologicheskaiia diversiia i natsional'naia katastrofa* (Moscow: Tretii Rim, 2003).

<sup>54</sup> The most complete historical account of the “reform” see in: N.F. Kapterev, *Patriarkh Nikon i tsar' Aleksei Mikhailovich*, vol. 1; Zenkovsky, *Russkoe staroobriadchestvo*.

massive church dissent. This phenomenon became known in the historiography as the “Russian Schism,” another variant the “Old Ritualist Schism” (*raskol staroobriadchestva*), or, simply, the “Schism.” The same name is used to signify collectively all of the dissenters and their beliefs.

This chapter argues that the use of both the term “reform” and the concept of “Schism” as analytic categories are problematic for the seventeenth century. The meanings they carry today were neither familiar, nor relevant for seventeenth-century Muscovites. First, the aspirations of Nikon were not really different from the ones of his opponents, as he aimed to rectify the true Orthodoxy, not to innovate or reform it in the modern sense of this word. Second, the commonly used term “schismatics,” even though widely applied in the polemical treatises and legal documents since the very beginning of the dispute about liturgical practice, was not reserved exclusively for the opponents of the Nikon’s changes. Rather, until late in the seventeenth century, it belonged to a set of polemical condemnations in the ecclesiastical vocabulary of the time.

It is a truism to say that the rejection of the new liturgical books was an ecclesiastical conflict. Nonetheless, it bares an important point: that we should not disparage the religious message of the protesters as a mere rhetoric in favor of “real” causes of the protests – social or political disagreement with the church and state authorities. It is a historiographical situation very similar to the one in the study of the Protestant Reformation – in trying to explain the fundamental causes of the rise of Protestantism historians sometimes tend to overlook the profoundly religious spirit of the phenomenon.<sup>55</sup> Certainly, the analytical categories employed in social sciences help us to put Nikon’s “reform” and the protests against it in a wider historical context, but they definitely fail to meaningfully describe the worldview and inspirations of “correctors” and protestors alike. In the end, these categories cannot explain without the prejudice of the modern

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<sup>55</sup> Gregory, *Salvation at Stake*, 99-111.



age why, on the one hand, the authorities ruthlessly enforced the changes in the liturgical practice, while, on the other hand, many people among the dissenters were ready to accept even death in the name of what they believed was the true sign of the cross.

### **Book “Corrections”**

At the opening of the Russian Church Council gathered in Moscow in 1654 the Patriarch Nikon manifested a commitment to God’s laws in their meaning as well as in the letter. In support of it he cited selected quotes from the Gospel of John attributed to Jesus Christ himself: “If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples,” “if anyone keeps my word, he will never see death” (John 8:31, 51), and several others with the same message, which any Christian denominations would share.<sup>56</sup> This affirmation set the scene for a momentous event – an announcement of the “correction” campaign for Russian liturgical books, which divided the Church for generations to come.

The Patriarch laid down a convoluted argument for the absolute necessity of the changes. First, he quoted verbatim a document that was very important for the Russian Church - the decision of the 1591 Constantinople Council to grant Muscovy its own patriarchate. It proclaimed the supremacy of Eastern Orthodox Christianity, as it had reached a state of perfection, and warned against the threat of any “innovations”:

Since, therefore, the Orthodox Church has obtained perfection, not only in the piety of its dogmas and in the understanding of God (*bogorazumie*/theognosis), but also in the holy ecclesiastical things and liturgical ordo, it is proper for us also to root out innovation (*novina*) from all aspects of church life, since innovations (*noviny*)

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<sup>56</sup> *Deianie Moskovskago sobora, byvshago v tsarskikh palatakh v leto ot sozdaniia mira 7162, ot voploshcheniia zhe Bozhiia Slova* 1654, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Moscow: v Sinodal’noi tipografii, 1887), f. 1 v.

are always the cause of ecclesiastical disarray (*smiatenie*) and division (*razluchenie*).<sup>57</sup>

Then, Patriarch Nikon explained that the books printed in Russia before he became patriarch in fact contained some “novel rites” (*novovvodnye chiny*), i.e. “innovations” of the sort the Constantinople Council warned against. Based on this assertion, Nikon posed a rhetorical question to the Moscow Church Council: whether the Russian Church should “follow our own newly printed service books,” i.e. the books containing suspicious “innovations,” or adhere to the “Greek and our own old [handwritten books], both of which demonstrate the same rites and ordinances (*chin i ustav*).”<sup>58</sup> The acts of the Church Council recorded that its members agreed unanimously and audibly that the “old handwritten and Greek” books were the model, hence contemporary Russian service books should conform to them.<sup>59</sup> Soon, the Printing house in Moscow, controlled by the ecclesiastical authorities, started to print and distribute the “corrected” books.<sup>60</sup>

The first “new” book appeared in print in August 1655. It was *The Service Book* (*Sluzhebnik*), which in addition to the instructions for clergy contained a lengthy introduction explaining the need for “correction.” It stated that unlike the “ancient Greek and Slavic sacred books,” modern Russian books contained “errors” due to the “scribes’ lack of attention.”<sup>61</sup> The foreword raised this seemingly mundane question of editorial shortcomings to a dogmatic importance: the “errors” created small but nonetheless dangerous flaws in the unity of the Orthodox Church, and so needed to be emended. Thus, with the support of Russian hierarchs

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<sup>57</sup> *Deianie Moskovskago sobora*, ff. 2 v.-3 (English translation cited with corrections by: Paul Meyendorff, *Russia, Ritual, and Reform*, 43). It was actually a quote from the decision of the 1591 Constantinople Council to grant the Moscow metropolitanate the status of a patriarchate (*Ibid.*, f. 5). The decision was also cited verbatim in the Acts of the Moscow Church Council of 1654 (*Ibid.*, ff. 4-15 v.).

<sup>58</sup> *Deianie Moskovskago sobora*, f. 16.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, f. 17 v.

<sup>60</sup> The church and state held a monopoly over book printing in seventeenth-century Russia. The Moscow Printing house (*pechatnyi dvor*) was the only producer of printed books, mostly of ecclesiastical content.

<sup>61</sup> *Sluzhebnik* (Moscow: Pечатnyi dvor, 1655), f. 38.

Patriarch Nikon strove to restore the perfect unity of the Russian Church with the Ecumenical Church, that is, the Greek Orthodox Church.<sup>62</sup>

In October, 1655, just several months after *The Service Book*, another important printed text saw the light of the day – the translation of the sixteenth-century explanation of the Orthodox liturgy by the Greek hieromonk Ioannis Nathanail titled the “Θεια λειτουργία” (The Divine Liturgy). In Russian translation the book became known as *The Skrizhal’*, which literally means *The Tablet*, i.e. the singular form of the tablets of the covenant.<sup>63</sup> The translation, which was slightly shorter than the original, included a lengthy foreword and appendix aimed at further justifying Nikon’s corrections. Consequently, *The Tablet (Skrizhal’)* became a symbol and a manifestation of the Patriarch’s endeavor in the eyes of Nikon’s proponents and opponents alike.

*The Tablet*’s significance lay not only in its restatement of the need for the changes of the Russian Church’s liturgical practice, but also its fierce denunciation of the opponents of such changes. The book’s foreword compared Patriarch Nikon to Aaron, the first Old Testament high priest whose foes perished thanks to God. The same fate awaited anyone opposing to Nikon, *The Tablet* promised.<sup>64</sup> The dissenters, who “dare to mutter maliciously” about the Patriarch, were presented as the disruptors of the existing “good order” (*blagochinie*), fostering a “disorder offensive to God” (*bogomerzkoe bezchinie*). The origins of their disobedience were rather mundane: the dissenters were “either induced by the mind-harming envy or clouded with the utter ignorance.”<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, ff. 28-29, 2 v.-3 (2<sup>nd</sup> foreword, starting with new pagination).

<sup>63</sup> *Skrizhal’* (Moscow: Pechatnyi dvor, 1655). “Η θεια λειτουργία” was published in 1574 in Venice. More about the book and its translation in Russian see: “Grecheskii podlinnik nikonovskoi Skrizhali,” in *Bibliograficheskie zapiski*, t. 7 (1892), 469-480; Karl Christian Felmy, *Die Deutung der Göttlichen Liturgie in der russischen Theologie: Wege und Wandlungen russischer Liturgie-Auslegung* (Berlin; New York: de Gruyter, 1984), 80-111.

<sup>64</sup> *Skrizhal’*, ff. 14-15.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, ff. 14-16.

Among other “corrected” elements of Russian religious practice, the appendix to *The Tablet* focused especially on the sign of the cross. The compilers of the book incorporated several documents, such as the letter of the Patriarch Paisios of Constantinople to Patriarch Nikon, that unequivocally affirmed the only proper way to perform it, i.e. with the first three fingers put together in a pinch.<sup>66</sup>

The change in the sign of the cross provides the best illustration of the ambiguity of the Nikonian corrections. A combination of the index and middle fingers, symbolizing the two natures of Jesus Christ, and the three other fingers as a symbol of the Trinity was in use for the sign of the cross in Byzantine Orthodoxy until the thirteenth century. This custom gradually changed in the following decades to the sign of the cross in which the thumb, index and middle fingers represented the Trinity, while the fourth and little fingers stood for the two natures of Jesus Christ. The Rus’ adopted from Byzantium the first variant together with the Orthodox Christianity at the end of the tenth century. Not surprisingly this configuration of fingers had remained common practice in Muscovy in the mid-seventeenth century when Patriarch Nikon initiated liturgical revisions.<sup>67</sup>

Nikon’s claims about the corrupted nature of Russian contemporary liturgical practice were not justified.<sup>68</sup> The variance between Russian and Greek Orthodox liturgical books was a product of the evolution of these two traditions. Patriarch Nikon, as well as his contemporaries,

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<sup>66</sup> *Skrizhal’*, ff. 739-741, 755-817 (including the supplement without pagination between pages 755 and 756). However, Paisios’ original letter written in Greek differed significantly from its translation printed in *The Tablet*: Paisios stated that the Greek church the sign of the cross with three fingers symbolizing the Holy Trinity is a common practice, yet further, in the description of priestly blessing, he adds that either way of combining fingers in the sign of the cross is equally valid (“Gramota Konstantonopol’skago patriarkha Paisiia I k moskovskomu patriarkhu Nikonu,” in *Khristianskoe chtenie*, 5-6 (1881), 569). The translation printed in *The Tablet* omits the latter remark making Paisios’ answer so as to mandate unambiguously the combination with three fingers (*Skrizhal’*, 743).

<sup>67</sup> N.F. Kapterev was among the first scholars who proved that Nikon was mistaken in accepting the modern to him Greek Orthodoxy as an ancient and historically correct model: Kapterev, *Patriarkh Nikon i tsar' Aleksei Mikhailovich*, vol. 1, 183-196.

<sup>68</sup> See the previous footnote. See also: Golubinskii, *K nashei polemike so staroobriadtsami*.

lacked a concept of liturgical evolution. However, he and his contemporaries also held very strong convictions about their own correctness.<sup>69</sup>

Notwithstanding the veracity of their judgment, Nikon and his assistants in the “corrections” made an extremely important claim about the rituals to be revised: they condemned one of the most important and explicit of them, the sign of the cross performed with the first two fingers customary in Russia at the time, as heretical. Therefore, the question of “corrections” of mere copyists’ inaccuracies became a theological issue.

*The Tablet* included a short but unambiguous statement of Patriarch Makarios of Antioch made in response to Patriarch Nikon’s inquiry about the correct version of the sign of the cross. Nikon complained about some unidentified people who defended the use of index and middle fingers “to depict the two natures of the God-man,” while the remaining fingers, thumb and the two small fingers constitute the Holy Trinity. The Russian Patriarch found such representation of the Holy Trinity to be “improper,” because the said three fingers “are not even to each other..., while we see in the Scripture the evenness of the three hypostases to one another.” Further Nikon expressed a serious, but quite unfathomable concern about the doctrinal dangers of the sign of the cross with two fingers: someone could “get into his head that there is a fourth person portrayed” in the remaining index and middle fingers.<sup>70</sup>

Makarios reportedly affirmed in response to Nikon:

We have adopted the tradition to make the sign of the precious cross with the three fingers of the right hand at the inception of the [Christian] faith from the Holy Apostles, and the Holy Fathers, and the Holy Seven Ecumenical Councils, and whoever among the Orthodox Christians does not make [the sign of] the cross in

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<sup>69</sup> As Paul Meyendorff insightfully remarked: “Like his Russian contemporaries, Nikon had no notion of liturgical evolution; so once he accepted the orthodoxy of Greek practice, he assumed that the ancient Greek manuscripts would agree totally with the modern Greek editions.” Meyendorff, *Russia, Ritual, and Reform*, 46-47.

<sup>70</sup> *Skrizhal*, appendix without pagination between ff. 755 and 756.

accordance with the tradition of the Eastern [Orthodox] Church, which is being held since the inception of the faith right until now, *is a heretic and an imitator of the Armenians* [here and hereafter, italics for emphasis are mine, unless stated otherwise – E.G.]. Therefore, he is excommunicated from the Father, Son, and the Holy Ghost, and anathematized.<sup>71</sup>

Such uncompromising condemnation of the old rituals had profound consequences for the polemics about the old and new books and made any sort of dialogue between the proponents and opponents of the changes practically impossible.

### **“Reform” or “Correction”?**

The expression “Patriarch Nikon’s reforms” is exceedingly common in scholarly as well as in popular literature concerning Russian history. Yet, it is problematic to talk about “reforms” in relation to the pre-Modern period in general, and to its ecclesiastical history in particular.<sup>72</sup> By calling Nikon’s measures “reforms” historians imply that the Patriarch’s aim was to modernize Russian liturgical practice, to improve it in accordance with a certain better standard. In fact, quite the opposite was the case. Neither Nikon nor his successors used the term “reform” to define the liturgical changes; instead, as the documents of the time demonstrate, they employed the verb “to correct” (*ispravit’*) and the noun “correction” (*ispravlenie*) invariably. These words referred to the

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<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.* Muscovite theologians denounced the Armenian variant of Orthodox Christianity as heretical and commanded the Orthodox believers to avoid contact with Armenians. See, for example: *Kirillova kniga* (Moscow: Pechatnyi dvor, 1644), ff. 266 v.-277. More on the anti-Armenian sentiment in Russian theological discourse: T. A. Oparina, *Ivan Nasedka i polemicheskoe bogoslovie kievskoi mitropolii* (Novosibirsk: Nauka, 1998), 112-113.

<sup>72</sup> See, for example, the criticism of the application of modern categories to the pre-Modern Muscovy: Robert O. Crumme, “‘Constitutional’ Reform during the Time of Troubles,” in *Reform in Russia and the U.S.S.R.: Pasts and Prospects* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989), 28-44; Mikhail Krom, “Religiozno-nravstvennoe obosnovanie administrativnykh preobrazovanii v Rossii XVI veka,” in *Religion und Integration im Moskauer Russland. Konzepte und Praktiken, Potentiale und Grenzen 14.-17. Jahrhundert*, ed. by Ludwig Steindorff (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2010) (*Forschungen zur osteuropäischen Geschichte*, 76 (2010)), 49-64; *Fenomen reform na zapade i vostoke Evropy v nachale Novogo vremeni (XVI-XVIII vv.): sbornik statei*, ed. by M.M. Krom and L.A. Pimenova (St. Petersburg: Izdatel’sтво Evropeiskogo Universiteta v Sankt-Peterburge, 2013).

purification of the Russian liturgical practice from “innovations” (*noviny*) intended for the return to the ancient pattern.<sup>73</sup> The book called *The Tablet* by its very title attested to the fact that the changes signified a return to God-given rules, recorded on the tablets of the covenant.

Needless to say, Russian ecclesiastical language of the seventeenth century was not unique. Historically, in the Christian ecclesiastical context the verb “reform” (*reformare* in Latin) and noun “reformation” (*reformatio* in Latin) carried a meaning very similar to the Russian *ispravlenie* (correction). From the early period of Christianity they denoted a personal transformation in Christ, i.e. “man’s reformation toward his original image-likeness to God.”<sup>74</sup> Only during the Middle Ages did the idea of “reform/reformation” extend its meaning to collective entities, such as the church and society. Yet, again, it referred to a restoration through cleansing of abuses and errors of some perfect condition which supposedly existed in the past. In the terminology of the German school of conceptual history (*Begriffsgeschichte*), the horizon of expectations (*Erwartungshorizont*), embedded in the medieval idea of “reformation,” was directed towards the past. In other words, the expectation of the future was a return to the past.<sup>75</sup> The Early Modern period demonstrated continuity rather than a break in the understanding of the concept of “reformation”: the Protestant breach from Roman Catholicism also proceeded under the banner of purification of the faith and restoration of the Apostolic Christianity.<sup>76</sup> Only in the eighteenth century did the notion of

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<sup>73</sup> Evgeny Grishin, “‘Reforma’ ili ‘ispravlenie’? K ponimaniyu tserkovnykh izmenenii serediny XVII veka,” in *Pravoslavie: Konfessiya, instituty, religioznost’ (XVII-XX vv.)*, ed. by M. Dolbilov and M. Rogoznyi (St. Petersburg: Izdatel’stvo EUSPb, 2009), 15-29. The idea of “correction” (*ispravlenie*) can be found in the documents regarding the ecclesiastical affairs long before Nikon’s patriarchate. See, for example, “correction of church piety” (*ispravlenie tserkovnomu blagochiniyu*) in the address of Tsar Ivan IV to the Church Council (*Stoglav*) of 1551: E.B. Emchenko, *Stoglav. Issledovanie i tekst* (Moscow: Indrik, 2000), 224.

<sup>74</sup> Gerhart B. Ladner, *The Idea of Reform. Its Impact on Christian Thought and Action in the Age of the Fathers* (New York, Evanston, and London: Harper & Row, 1967), 2-3.

<sup>75</sup> More in-depth discussion on the *Begriffsgeschichte* as an approach to the study of historical concepts see in: Reinhart Koselleck, *Future Past*, esp. 255-275.

<sup>76</sup> During medieval and early modern eras in Europe “a return to a mythical golden age” was a common trope not only in religious sphere, but in perception of change in general, including the revival of Greek and Roman heritage, popularized later by the name of Renaissance. Alexandra Walsham, “Migrations of the Holy: Explaining Religious

“reform” become an important attribute of social progress, a signifier for a conscious effort to advance the state of existence.<sup>77</sup>

Curiously enough, even though the Russian literary elite in charge of the book production was not employing words derived from the Latin verb *reformare*, they were well aware of them and their connection to Russian *ispravlenie*. The Latin-Slavic and Slavic-Latin dictionaries of the time demonstrate this perfectly: the Russian *ispravlenie* was equated with the Latin *correctio* and *emendatio*, and vice versa.<sup>78</sup> At the same time, the Latin noun *reformator* corresponded to the Russian *ispravitel'* (corrector) and *otnovitel'* (renovator). The latter meaning is noteworthy since it points to the ambiguity of the notion of “reform” in the Western world. The Russian equivalents of the noun *reformatio* stressed this aspect even more, as it was associated with Russian words *prezhdanie* (recreation) and *preobrazhenie* (transfiguration).<sup>79</sup>

The noun “reformators” (in Greek *ρεφορματοι*) appeared in the original letter of the Patriarch Paisios of Constantinople to Russian Patriarch Nikon written in Greek in 1654. It denounced “reformators” Martin Luther and John Calvin for the corruption of church dogmas under the veil of “correction” (*διορθωσεως*). However, the most interesting part is that the letter explained the apparent Latinism, “reformators” with its Greek equivalents: “they are called reformators, that is transformers (*μετασχηματιζαι*) and correctors (*διορθωται*) of the ancient

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Change in Medieval and Early Modern Europe,” *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, vol. 44, no. 2 (Spring 2014), 265).

<sup>77</sup> Lewis W. Spitz, “Reformation,” in *The Dictionary of the History of Ideas: Studies of Selected Pivotal Ideas*, ed. by Philip P. Wiener, vol. 4 (New York: 1973-74), 61-68; Eike Wolgast, “Reform, Reformation,” in *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe. Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland*, band 5 (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1984), 313-335; Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*, revised ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 262-263.

<sup>78</sup> See the Slavic adaptation of the popular sixteenth century Latin “Dictionarium” by the Italian lexicographer Ambrosius Calepinus (c. 1440-1510): *Leksykon latyns'kyi E. Slavynet'skogo. Leksykon sloveno-latyns'kyi E. Slavynet'skogo ta A. Korets'kogo-Satanovs'kogo* (Kyiv: Naukova dumka, 1973), 455, 144, 177.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 348. The main author of the cited dictionaries, the Ruthenian (Kiev Pechersky Lavra) monk Epifanii Slavynet'skyi, was, in fact, an active participant of the Nikon's “correction.” A.M. Panchenko, “Epifanii Slavynetskii,” in *Slovar' knizhnikov i knizhnosti Drevnei Rusi* (hereafter - *SKKDR*), vyp. 3, ch. 1 (St. Petersburg: Dmitrii Bulanin, 1992), 311-313.



faith.”<sup>80</sup> The seventeenth-century Russian translation of the letter, which was included into *The Tablet’s* appendix as an important argument in Nikon’s favor, skipped the word “reformators,” while providing its explanation: they [Luther and Calvin] “are called transformers (*preobrazitelie*) and correctors (*ispravitelie*) of the old faith,” reads the Russian translation. No doubt, that the translator of the letter connected the Greek calque of the Latin *reformatores* to the Russian noun *ispravlenie*.<sup>81</sup>

Therefore, the discourse of Nikon’s changes strove to prove their legitimacy and necessity through an appeal to the past, not as an attempt to modernize Russian Church. So, Nikon was certainly not a reformer in a modern sense of this word, for he did not intend to advance the Russian Church in accordance with some presumably modern standards of rationality and efficiency. Yet, Nikon can be called a reformer in the same sense as Martin Luther and John Calvin were – a corrector of faults and errors that supposedly accumulated over time in church teachings and practice.

### **Opposition to the “Corrections”**

While the changes Nikon introduced to church practice might seem insignificant to an outside observer, they immediately provoked disagreement from some Muscovite clergy. The influential archpriest of one of the most important Moscow churches, the Kazanskii cathedral in the Kremlin, Ivan Neronov and his associates archpriest Avvakum Petrov, the priests Danila of Kostroma, Login of Murom, and some others criticized the changes, calling them “innovations” (*noviny*) and “sophistry” (*mudrovanie*). Church officials reacted to these clerics’ disobedience with

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<sup>80</sup> “Gramota konstantopol’skago patriarkha Paisiia I k moskovskomu patriarkhu Nikonu,” 551.

<sup>81</sup> *Skrizhal’*, 715.

arrests, beatings, and confinement.<sup>82</sup> Oppositionists, comparing themselves to persecuted early Christians and church fathers, immediately recognized the Devil's works behind Nikon's actions. Moreover, they started to express a concern that the end of the world prophesized in the Scripture might be coming true before their own eyes.<sup>83</sup> "Watch out, brothers!" (*Bliuditesia, o bratie*) Ivan Neronov wrote from exile to his disciples, imitating Jesus Christ's own warning of the second coming (Matthew 24:4). "Watch out for a *schism*, watch for evildoers" (*bliuditesia raskola, bliuditesia zlykh delatelei*), Neronov continued, quoting St. Paul (Phil 3:2), and he added a line from the First Letter of John: "They went out from us, but they did not really belong to us. For if they had belonged to us, they would have remained with us" (1 John 2:19).<sup>84</sup> Therefore, it was the exiled archpriest who directly accused Nikon and his supporters of a "schism," yet Neronov's associates and their followers were the ones who entered Russian historical narrative with the stigma of "schismatics."<sup>85</sup>

Nikon, with the silent support of the tsar, escalated the situation even further by condemning those people who would not accept the new liturgical books as the only true Orthodox ones. In 1656 the Church Council assembled in Moscow anathematized Neronov and his supporters for their disobedience.<sup>86</sup> In addition, according to *The Tablet*, Patriarch Nikon together with Middle Eastern counterparts publicly proclaimed as "heretics" all the people who disobeyed

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<sup>82</sup> Zenkovsky, *Russkoe staroobriadchestvo*, 207-218.

<sup>83</sup> See, for example, 1654 archpriest Ivan Neronov's petition to the Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich: "Vtoroe poslanie Neronova k tsariu Alekseiu Mikhailovichu iz Spasokamennago monastyria, ot 27 fevralia 1654 g.," in *Materialy dlia istorii raskola*, t. 1 (1875), 53-54. See also: "Pis'mo Neronova k Stefanu Vonifat'evu iz Vologdy, ot 13 iulija 1654 goda," in *Ibid.*, 97-99, 102-103, 106.

<sup>84</sup> "Poslanie Neronova ko vsej bratii, otravlennoe iz Vologdy v Moskvu 13 iulija 1654 g.," in *Ibid.*, 121-122.

<sup>85</sup> More on Neronov see: Michels, "The First Old Believers in Tradition and Historical Reality," 499-502. Georg Michels downplays the importance of the Nikon's corrections in Neronov's conflict with the church authorities. The documents suggest that this issue, in fact, was important for the archpriest and his associates from the beginning of the correction campaign. See, for example, Neronov's petitions to the tsar, dated between 1654 and 1664; in them, the archpriest disparages Nikon and denounces the changes: *Materialy dlia istorii raskola*, t. 1 (1875), 54-59, 167-192, esp. 187, 191.

<sup>86</sup> "Sobornoe deianie na protopopa Ivana Neronova, v inochestve startsa Grigoriia, 1656 goda," in *Ibid.*, 131.

his authority and continued to use the old books and to follow the old rites, specifically the sign of the cross with two fingers.<sup>87</sup>

The nature and scale of the immediate protest against Nikon's corrections is a debated question. There is a strong case to argue the clerics' dissent disguised a rather mundane motive – a struggle for power in church affairs, or, to be more precise, their struggle to keep the power that they started to lose drastically after Nikon's rise to the position of patriarch.<sup>88</sup> It is also difficult to substantiate how many supporters the disobedient clergy really garnered among the laity. Neronov, for example, warned the tsar in his 1660 petition that the changes caused massive estrangement of believers from the official Church: "thousands of thousands of Christian souls are alien to the fellowship of the most-pure sacraments due to doubts in the Church's regard, and there is no teaching on the part of the church teachers due to this discord."<sup>89</sup> No archival record available to us can support Neronov's claim about massive evasion of the sacraments, though.<sup>90</sup>

In July 1658, due to a conflict with Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich, Nikon resigned from the position of patriarch in a public manner. Even though he formally remained the head of the Russian Church and later tried to return to the office, the tsar and his agents made sure that Nikon could not regain power.<sup>91</sup> The dissenters perceived Nikon's fall as an opportunity to reconsider the changes in liturgical books. They hoped that the Church Council, which Aleksei Mikhailovich

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<sup>87</sup> Kapterev, *Patriarkh Nikon i tsar' Aleksei Mikhailovich*, 179-180, 193-195.

<sup>88</sup> See Michels, "The First Old Believers in Tradition and Historical Reality," 481-508. Idem., *At War with the Church*, 21-64.

<sup>89</sup> "Chelobitnaia Neronova tsariu Alekseiu Mikhailovichu o skoreishem izbranii patriarkha vmesto Nikona" (1660), in *Materialy dlia istorii raskola*, t. 1 (1875), 170. The documents of the Moscow Church Council of 1666-1667 mention that "many Christians" (*mnozi khristiane*) withdrew from the attendance of the church services and sacraments ("Skazanie o sviatom sobore," in *Materialy dlia istorii raskola*, t. 2, ch. 2 (1876), 123). Another record of the Council's acts exclaims that "schismatics and mutineers" "nearly deceived all of the people" in the country ("Kniga sobornykh deianii, o raznykh delakh i o nuzhnykh tserkovnykh vinakh voprosy," in *Ibid.*, 250).

<sup>90</sup> Georg Michels suggests that the massive rejection of the "new rituals" started no earlier than in 1660s and consisted of a set of local reactions to the disciplining efforts of the church hierarchy. Michels, *At War with the Church*. See also: Idem., "The First Old Believers in Ukraine," 289-313; Idem., "Ruling without Mercy," 515-42; and others.

<sup>91</sup> Kapterev, *Patriarkh Nikon i tsar' Aleksei Mikhailovich*, 394-431; S.V. Lobachev, *Patriarkh Nikon* (St. Petersburg: Iskusstvo-SPB, 2003), 203-226.

decided to assemble in Moscow in order to replace Nikon, could review the “newly introduced tenets” (*novovvodnye dogmaty*) and return to the old ways.<sup>92</sup> Two of the dissident clergymen, priests Nikita Dobrynin and Lazar’ of Romanov, prepared detailed accounts enumerating and analyzing “heresies” manifested in the Nikon’s “novelties.”<sup>93</sup> Lazar’s writing challenged the very need for changes in Russian liturgical practice by playing on the illogic of Nikon’s “correction”:

Let the pious [person] to hear and heed: whatever word is extracted from the old books, a new evil one is put in its place, and any line changed is changed unrighteously for the deception of the Church: *for the correction of the straight is rather a distortion, not a straightening.*<sup>94</sup>

The Church Council the clergy anticipated so much started its first session in Moscow in April 1666. It brought together Russian as well as foreign Orthodox hierarchs, so that it would resemble the ecumenical councils of the past. The questions at stake were very serious ones: the formal removal of Nikon from the position of patriarch and an endorsement of the debated corrections in the liturgical books. The Council succeeded in both of these endeavors: hierarchs tried and dethroned the Patriarch Nikon, choosing a successor in his place; at the same time, they confirmed the rightness of Nikon’s changes and denounced the most prominent dissenters individually.

The Council proclaimed that the “corrections” were final: “from now on let no one dare to add or take away anything in the Holy Writ. Even if an angel will say something against it, let him

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<sup>92</sup> “Drugaia chelobitnaia Neronova tsariu Alekseiu Mikhailovichu o izbranii preemnika patriarkhu Nikonu” (1664), in *Materialy dlia istorii raskola*, t. 1 (1875), 191. See also about the anticipation of the Council on the Nikon’s “innovations:” “Doprosnye rechi d’iakona Fedora, 1665 g. dekabria 9,” in *Ibid.*, 402-403. The deacon also allegedly admitted during the interrogation to be reluctant to use the new service books in church service until the decision of the Council (*Ibid.*) “Startsa Grigoriia Neronova chelobitnaia tsariu Alekseiu Mikhailovichu za protopopa Avvakuma, podannaia 6 dekabria 1664 g.,” *Ibid.*, 199).

<sup>93</sup> “Suzdal’skago sobornago popa Nikity Konstantinova Dobrynina (Pustosviata) chelobitnaia tsariu Alekseiu Mikhailovichu na knigu Skrizhal’ i na novoispravlennia tserkovnyia knigi,” *Materialy dlia istorii raskola*, t. 4, ch. 1 (1878), 1-178; “Rospis’ vkrattse novovvodnym tserkovnym razdorom, ikhzhze sobra Nikon patriarkh so Arseniem cherntsem ot raznykh ver,” in *Ibid.*, 179-206.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, 208.

not be believed.”<sup>95</sup> The ones who disagreed with the Council’s decision and dared to “contradict” (*prekosloviti*) them were “truly self-condemned and the heir (*naslednik*) to the Council’s anathema (*kliatva*), written in the Council’s Acts, as disobedient to God and an opponent (*protivnik*) of the rules of the Holy Fathers.”<sup>96</sup>

The Church Council and the dissident clergy assumed opposing positions towards Nikon’s “correction.” As one of the active dissenters, the deacon Feodor Ivanov, told the church hierarchs participating at the Council:

you enforce and teach about the Holy Creed, the alleluia and the composition of fingers against the church tenets, wickedly and impiously and blasphemously, and all that is because Satan deceived Patriarch Nikon.<sup>97</sup>

In refuting the deacon Feodor, the Council defended the Patriarch it just deprived of his rank:

[Feodor] reviled the rightfully corrected creed (*simvol blagoispravlennyi*) and the tripling of the holy alleluia, as well as combination of the first [three] fingers in the sign of the cross, all of which were rightly corrected (*blagochinno ispravishasia*) by the grace of the most holy and life-giving Spirit in accordance with the tradition of the holy fathers and uncorrupted by Satan’s deception, as he, [Feodor], God-defying blasphemer, blind leader, and mad ignoramus slanders the Holy Patriarch Nikon.<sup>98</sup>

The Council’s strict approach of anathematizing anyone who would not repent had partial success. Many oppositionist clergymen, including the archpriest Ivan Neronov and the priest Nikita Dobrynin did repent and received relatively light penalties; others, such as the archpriest Avvakum Petrov and the priest Lazar’, persisted, thus were imprisoned and eventually put to

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<sup>95</sup> “Kniga sobornykh deianii,” in *Materialy dlia istorii raskola*, t. 2, ch. 2 (1876), 238.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 396.

<sup>97</sup> “Pokazaniia d’iakona Fedora v patriarshei palate 11 maia 1666 goda,” in *Materialy dlia istorii raskola*, t. 1 (1875), 413.

<sup>98</sup> “Sobornoe opredelenie o d’iakone Fedore” (May 1666), in *Ibid.*, 415-416.

death.<sup>99</sup> The Council's decisions did not restore peace and order in the Russian Church. Instead, the Church Council marked the decisive starting point of the drama that became known as the "Russian Schism" (*Russkii Raskol*).

### **The Zealots of Piety and Book Publishing Prior to Nikon**

Why would the seemingly insignificant changes in the liturgical practice spur such a strong reaction on the part some clerics and subsequently split the Church? This reaction is not really surprising considering the historical setting of the "correction:" the decades preceding it saw a noteworthy rise of religious unease resulting from Apocalyptic expectations.

First, it is important to take into consideration the prehistory of the conflict between the Patriarch Nikon and the disobedient clergy led by Ivan Neronov. The priests Neronov, Avvakum, Lazar', Loggin, as well as tsar's spiritual father Stefan Vonifat'ev, and some other clerics and laymen, belonged to the group known in the literature as Zealots of Piety (*revniteli blagochestiia*), or god devotees (*bogoliubtsy*).<sup>100</sup> With the full support of the young tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich, who inherited the throne in 1645, they constituted a very influential group in the Church and the

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<sup>99</sup> See the documents of the 1666-1667 Church Councils: *Materialy dlia istorii raskola*, t. 2, ch. 2 (1876). The detailed account of Avvakum's life and works see in: *Pustozerskii sbornik: avtografy sochinenii Avvakuma i Epifaniia* (Leningrad: Nauka, 1975). Famous Avvakum's autobiography in English translation: Avvakum (Petrovich), *Archpriest Avvakum, the life written by himself: with the study of V. V. Vinogradov* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1979). The sentence that would include justification for Avvakum's execution has not survived, however, it is most likely that the authorities found him guilty in the conspiracy to defame the memory of the deceased Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich (d. 1676): in January, 1681 several of Avvakum's followers smeared the grave of the tsar with tar, supposedly on the orders of the imprisoned archpriest. See more on that in: V.I. Malyshev, "Novye materialy o protopope Avvakume," in *TODRL*, t. 21 (1965), 334-345, esp. 343; N.V. Ponyrko, "Novye materialy o protopope Avvakume (Dva 'dela' mezenskoi voevodskoi kantseliarii o syne Avvakuma Afanasii)," in *Ibid.*, t. 44 (1990), 397-402, esp. 401.

<sup>100</sup> Both of these terms, most likely, originate from Ivan Neronov's correspondence. It did not signify a strictly defined group of individuals or an ideologically defined faction, but rather referred to an indefinite circle of like-minded people.

court. Before becoming patriarch, Nikon himself belonged to this circle and in fact owed his appointment at this position to the support and lobbying from the same people.<sup>101</sup>

The Zealots were advocating the moral improvement of the clergy and laity alike through instructive and disciplinary measures. They tried to restrain the everyday lives of clergymen and their parishioners by prohibiting what they perceived as “pagan” festive activities and limiting the sale and consumption of alcohol and tobacco. In addition, they promoted a more orderly church service that would occupy almost the whole day, reintroduced the practice of regular priestly sermons, which was not common in the Russian Church at the time, and attempted to enforce other unpopular initiatives.<sup>102</sup> The Zealots specifically advocated an urgent “church correction” (*ispravlenie tserkovnoe*) - eradication of the “unrighteousness and falsehood” (*neispravlenie i lzha*) in the Russian Church that caused “corruption” of the Orthodox faith (*o vere povrezhdenie*).<sup>103</sup> Just like Nikon’s campaign for the changes in the liturgical books some of the Zealots later opposed so fiercely, their own program for the improvement of believers’ morals and church practice can be

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<sup>101</sup> “Rospis’ spornykh rechei protopopa Ivana Neronova s patriarkhom Nikonom,” *Materialy dlia istorii raskola*, t. 1 (1875), 47. See also: Lobachev, *Patriarkh Nikon*, 100-107.

<sup>102</sup> For more information on the Zealots, see: N.F. Kapterev, *Patriarkh Nikon i ego protivniki v dele ispravleniia tserkovnykh obriadov*, vyp. 1 (Moscow: Universitetskaia tipografiia, 1887), 102-146; Zenkovsky, *Russkoe staroobriadchestvo*, 74-90; S.B. Filippov, *Religioznaia bor’ba i krizis traditsionalizma v Rossii XVII veka* (Budapest: Russica Pannonica, 2007), 65-71. The program Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich prepared for the Church Council of 1649 demonstrates that he fully supported the Zealots’ agenda. Among other things the tsar proposed to impose formal education for parish clergy and strengthen pastoral instruction among parishioners: S.A. Belokurov, “Deianie moskovskogo tserkovnogo sobora 1649 goda,” in *Chteniia v Imperatorskom Obshchestve istorii i drevnostei rossiiskikh pri Moskovskom universitete* (hereafter – *ChOidr*), 218 vols. (Moscow: Universitetskaia tipografiia, 1846-1908), kn. 4 (1894), 48-49.

<sup>103</sup> See the 1636 petition of the Nizhnii Novgorod clergy led by the priest Ivan Neronov that enunciated the principles of the future Zealots’ actions: N.V. Rozhdestvenskii, “K istorii bor’by s tserkovnymi bezporiadkami, otgoloskami iazychestva i porokami v russkom bytu XVII v.,” in *ChOidr*, kn. 2 (1902), 21-22, and *passim*. See more on the meanings of *neispravlenie* (unrighteousness) in the Old Russian language in: *Slovar’ russkogo iazyka XI-XVII vv.*, vyp. 11 (Moscow: Nauka, 1986), 138-139. See also the critique of the overly credulous reading of the Russian clerical “exposures” of the moral decay in the church flock: Zhivov, “Dvoeverie i osoby kharakter russkoi kul’turnoi traditsii,” 306-316.

associated with the concept of “reform” in its pre-modern sense, that is as a return to imaginary past.<sup>104</sup>

In the 1640s and the beginning of 1650s, at the same time as the Zealots enjoyed strong influence on church and court affairs, Muscovy experienced a rapid growth in publishing activity: the Moscow Printing house, the only publishing house in the whole state, controlled directly by the ecclesiastical authorities, introduced dozens of predominantly ecclesiastical titles in thousands of copies.<sup>105</sup> Didactic literature coming out from the printing house was well aligned with the agenda of the Zealots, who certainly had influenced the preferences for the published texts.<sup>106</sup> These books instructed believers in Christian life and piety, explained the Orthodox faith, and cautioned against the Devil’s schemes and his “heresies.” Two collections of anti-Catholic and anti-Protestant polemical writings - *The St. Cyril's Book* (*Kirillova kniga*) (1644) and the *The Book about Faith* (*Kniga o vere*) (1648) - played a prominent role in the explication of heresies.

*The St. Cyril's Book* got its name from its opening tract, “The Word of St. Cyril of Jerusalem” (*Slovo Kirilla Ierusalimskogo*). It was in fact the Ruthenian theologian Stefan Zyzzanii’s commentary on the apocalyptic teachings of Patriarch Cyril of Jerusalem (315-386). *The St. Cyril's Book* was a compendium of mostly Russian and Polish-Lithuanian polemical works, edited and augmented specifically for this publication. The book was intended to be “a shield and a fence

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<sup>104</sup> The term “reformists” is frequently used in relation to Zealots, however, in an objectivist rather than historical sense of this term. See, for example: Zenkovsky, *Russkoe staroobriadchestvo*; Filippov, *Religioznaia bor'ba i krizis traditsionalizma*, 87, and passim.

<sup>105</sup> The list of editions see in: A.S. Zernova, *Knigi kirillovskoi pečati, izdannye v Moskve v XVI-XVII vekakh: Svodnyi katalog* (Moscow: Tipografiia Biblioteki imeni V.I. Lenina, 1958), 53-71. About printing and book sales in Muscovy in that period see: S.P. Luppov, *Kniga v Rossii v XVII veke* (Leningrad: Nauka, 1970); I.V. Pozdeeva, V.P. Pushkov, A.V. Dadykin, *Moskovskii pečatnyi dvor - fakt i faktor russkoi kul'tury, 1618-1652 gg.: ot vosstanovleniia posle gibeli v Smutnoe vremia do patriarkha Nikona: issledovaniia i publikatsii* (Moscow: Mosgorarkhiv, 2001).

<sup>106</sup> Some historic evidence suggests that archpriest Stefan Vonifat'ev was directly responsible for the book's appearance: Fedor Ivanov (deacon), “Poslanie iz Pustozerska k synu Maksimu i prochim srodnikam i bratiiam po vere” (1678/79), in *Materialy dlia istorii raskola*, t. 6 (1883), 143. See also: Rumiantseva, *Narodnoe antitserkovnoe dvizhenie v Rossii*, 42-53.



against evil heretics, namely the Catholic, Protestant, and Uniate churches.<sup>107</sup> The Muscovites were especially concerned about the last. In 1595 a substantial part of the Eastern Orthodox hierarchy of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth signed the union agreement, known as the Union of Brest, with the Roman Catholic Church. They joined the Roman Catholic Church and recognized the Pope's primacy under the condition of retaining Eastern Orthodox church rites.<sup>108</sup> The believers from the Polish-Lithuanian lands who remained loyal to Eastern Orthodoxy as well as their fellow believers in Muscovy perceived the union as apostasy and a clear sign of the last days.

*The St. Cyril's Book* communicated an important message about the mission of Russian Orthodoxy on the eve of the coming of the Antichrist. The Antichrist, as the book argued, was expected in the eighth millennium from the creation of the world (*vo os'mom vetse*), that is, any time after 1492.<sup>109</sup> The place was defined with more certainty: the translators of "The Word of St. Cyril of Jerusalem" added to the phrase "we are living close to the end of the world" the specific locale – "we *in Rus'* are living close to the end of the world" (*zde u nas na Rusi prebyvaiushche uzhe bliz skonchaniia mira*).<sup>110</sup> The mission of Orthodox Russians, as the only remaining true believers surrounded by the Devil's servants - "heretics" - was to "hold firmly" to their faith and piety.<sup>111</sup>

*The St. Cyril's Book* associated any attempt of change in religious sphere as a part of the Devil's scheme to undermine the Orthodoxy. The Devil had been sending his "vessels" in the form

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<sup>107</sup> *Kirillova kniga*, f. 560 v. The most thorough study of the content of the book and the history of its publication see in: Oparina, *Ivan Nasedka i polemicheskoe bogoslovie*, 102-142, 212-243.

<sup>108</sup> See more on the Union of Brest and its implications in: Barbara Skinner, *The Western Front of the Eastern Church: Uniate and Orthodox Conflict in Eighteenth-century Poland, Ukraine, Belarus, and Russia* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2009).

<sup>109</sup> *Kirillova kniga*, f. 2 v.

<sup>110</sup> Oparina, *Ivan Nasedka i polemicheskoe bogoslovie*, 227.

<sup>111</sup> "We should hold firmly to our Orthodox creed, because our faith unlike all other infidel faiths rests on piety as if on a high throne." *Kirillova kniga*, f. 10 v.

of “heresies,” such as Arians, later Latins, and, finally, Calvinists and Lutherans, since the dawn of times in order “to cause church schisms and disrupt the true faith,” concluded *The St. Cyril's Book*.<sup>112</sup> It also unequivocally asserted that the Russian Church in its turn sustained the “Christian faith passed from our Lord Jesus Christ himself, his holy disciples and apostles, and holy fathers.”<sup>113</sup>

In this light the discussion on what constituted the proper Orthodox sign of the cross received an extraordinary importance. One of the writings in the collection, “The Word about the Cross” (*Slovo o kreste*), advised the pious reader to adhere to this ritual in regular religious practice in order to differentiate themselves from the “infidels”:

every day and every hour, commencing with any of our businesses, as well while going to bed or getting up [it is proper] to mark your own face with a sign of the precious cross without shame instead of heeding to infidels or deceived people. It is a sign that denounces their lawlessness. As Basil the Great says about it, the sign [of the cross] is like a crown of our King Christ, which we carry with ourselves.<sup>114</sup>

The only Orthodox sign of the cross, *The St. Cyril's Book* stressed many times, is the one consisting of the combination of index and middle fingers symbolizing “the mystery of our Lord Jesus Christ, a perfect God and a perfect man,” accompanied with the remaining three fingers joined for the Holy Trinity.<sup>115</sup> At the same time, the thumb, fourth, and little fingers combined together is nothing but a mark of “Latin heresy,” i.e. the Catholicism.<sup>116</sup>

Unsurprisingly, a decade later *The St. Cyril's Book's* message could be perceived a resounding argument against Nikon's changes in liturgical practice. The example of the Union of

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<sup>112</sup> *Kirillova kniga*, ff. 559-560.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, f. 183.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, ff. 179 v.-181.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, ff. 236-236 v.

Brest and its strong apocalyptic connotations sounded as a warning for Russian Orthodox believers forced to accept the new way to make the sign of the cross, among other changes. The priest Ivan Neronov, one of the first opponents of the “innovations,” in July 1654 reported on a vision of Jesus Christ he had soon after his conflict with Patriarch Nikon began. In it, Jesus said to Neronov: “Ioann, dare and do not be afraid of death: you should strengthen the tsar with my name, so that Rus’ would not be afflicted by the same fate as Uniates were.”<sup>117</sup>

Another collection published in the Moscow Printing house in 1640s, *The Book about Faith* (1648), specified the date of the imminent Apocalypse. Like *The St. Cyril's Book*, it was comprised of a number of translated and edited polemical treatises against Catholic, Protestant, and Uniate “heresies.”<sup>118</sup> The 30<sup>th</sup> chapter of the book provided the reader with the prophetic message that the end of the world was about to happen in 1666. This number originated from the addition of the Antichrist’s number 666, so-called the number of the beast, and 1000 – a number of years the Satan was allegedly bound and locked in the abyss by Jesus Christ’s first coming.<sup>119</sup> Both of these numbers originated from the Book of Revelation (Rev 13:18; 20:2-3).

The history of Christianity, as recounted in *The Book about Faith*, seemed to support this prophecy: about a thousand years after Christ’s crucifixion, the “apostasy” of the Roman Catholic Church from the only true church, the Eastern Orthodox, took place—that is, the Schism of 1054. About 600 years later, in 1595, “the apostasy and deception of the so called Uniates” occurred.<sup>120</sup> Therefore, *The Book about Faith* argued, as the year 1666 approached, it was time to be cautious and prepared for the last “battle against the devil himself.”<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> “Pis’mo Neronova k Stefanu Vonifat’evu iz Vologdy, ot 13 iulia 1654 goda,” *Materialy dlia istorii raskola*, t. 1 (1875), 99-100.

<sup>118</sup> More on the book: Oparina, *Ivan Nasedka*, 243-284.

<sup>119</sup> *Kniga o vere edinoi istinnoi pravoslavnoi* (Moscow: Tipografiia P.I. Riabushinskago, 1912), ff. 270-271.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, ff. 187-195 v., 203-217.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, f. 271.

Rather than spreading panic among the Russian Orthodox believers, *The Book about Faith* communicated an important didactic message to the readers: the disastrous and horrific signs of the end of the world it described ought to encourage them to adopt “the transformation,” for the sake of a “godly life” (*ispravleniia radi bogougodnago zhitiia vozliublenne*). It was not the end of the world itself, but the inability to undergo transformation (*ispravit'sia*) that posed the real danger to the believer, for such a person could not hope for salvation, as he/she was “a false Christian.”<sup>122</sup> This idea apparently corresponded very well to the Zealots’ “reformist” agenda, whether or not they were directly involved in the editing and publishing of the book. Yet, the message was undeniably apocalyptic, the product of the religious unease about the current historic moment.

Apparently, Nikon’s “correction” fueled existing popular apocalyptic expectations rather than causing them. The rise of mass suicide cases in 1660s, in which dozens of people burned themselves in wooden barns locked from the inside, also attest to this fact.<sup>123</sup> In accordance with the polemical treatises of the seventeenth century, historians directly connect the appearance of the practice of collective self-immolation with the name of the elder Kapiton, who practiced solitary monastic life in the Kostroma region since the 1630s. He allegedly prophesized the end of the world and urged his followers to the strictest austerity, even fasting to death, well before Nikon’s appointment to the patriarchal throne.<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, f. 281.

<sup>123</sup> This phenomenon continued with various intensity across the country until the end of the nineteenth century and caused thousands of deaths. See, for example, recent works on the topic: M.B. Pliukhanova, “O natsional’nykh sredstvakh samoopredeleniia lichnosti: samosakralizatsiia, samosozhzhenie, plavanie na korable,” in *Iz istorii russkoi kul’tury*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., t. 3 (Moscow: Iazyki russkoi kul’tury, 2000), 382-384; Ekaterina Romanova, *Massovye samosozhzheniia staroobriadtsev v Rossii v XVII-XIX vekakh* (St. Petersburg: Izdatel’stvo EUSPb, 2012). Ekaterina Romanova put together the most comprehensive to date list of the self-immolation cases based on the archival as well as published sources: *Ibid.*, 254-262.

<sup>124</sup> In 1651, before Nikon’s rise to power, Kostroma officials on the orders from Moscow initiated the first of a series of military assaults on Kapiton’s hermitages due to his dangerous teachings: the church officials connected his name with the belief, widespread in the Upper Volga region, in the apostasy of the Russian Church and an imminent end of the world. The earliest evidence about elder Kapiton is surveyed in: Rumiantseva, *Narodnoe antitserkovnoe dvizhenie*, 72-73. Critical remarks on the primary sources and study of the movement: Crummey, “Religious Radicalism in Seventeenth-Century Russia: Reexamining the Kapiton Movement,” in *Idem.*, *Old Believers in a Changing World*,

## Conclusion

In conclusion, the analysis of the language of contemporary sources demonstrates that both sides of the mid-seventeenth-century debate about the liturgical books and their correction appealed to the same ideal – they wished to keep the Russian Orthodox Church and its *ordo* pure and in accordance with the ancient pattern. The perspective on the concrete manifestation of what this pattern should be differed, though: Patriarch Nikon and his associates viewed the modern Greek practice as a manifestation of the most perfect Orthodoxy, while Nikon's opponents looked for the ideal in the Russian Church itself. The context of the apocalyptic expectations in Muscovite society made it easy to recognize in Nikon's actions the decisive battle between good and evil unfolding before their eyes and identify the proper words to describe it accordingly.

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52-67. See more on Kapiton and his teachings in: Zenkovsky, *Russkoe staroobriadchestvo*, 144-156; V.S. Rumiantseva, "Eres' Kapitona i pravoslavnaia tserkov' v 40-80-e gody XVII v.," in *Religii mira. Istoriia i sovremennost'*. *Ezhegodnik 1984* (Moscow: Nauka, 1984), 95-113; Idem., *Narodnoe antitserkovnoe dvizhenie*, 77-78; A.V. Borodkin, "'V stranakh Nova grada na Tikhvine'. Staroobriadtsy-kapitony v kontse XVII v.," in *Staroobriadchestvo: Istoriia, kul'tura, sovremennost'* (Moscow: Borovsk, 2010), 30-37. The collection of documents dedicated to the search and prosecution of "kapitons" in the 1660s: *Narodnoe antitserkovnoe dvizhenie v Rossii XVII veka. Dokumenty Prikaza tainykh del o raskol'nikakh 1665-1667 gg.*, ed. by V.S. Rumiantseva (Moscow: Institut istorii SSSR AN SSSR, 1986).

Although a real historic figure, the specifics of his undoubtedly apocalyptic teaching and his deeds are ambiguous. They are known from later polemical works, which either praised him for the pious life or denounced him as "heretic" and bigot. For the positive image of elder Kapiton in the works of Old Believer writers: "Otrazitel'noe pisanie o novoizobretennom puti samoubiistvennykh smertei," in *Pamiatniki drevnei pis'mennosti*, vol. 108 (1895), 10-11; Simeon Denisov, *Vinograd rossiiskii ili opisanie postradavshikh v Rossii za drevletserkovnoe blagochestie* (Moscow: Tipografiia G.Lissnera i D.Sovko, 1906), 46-47; D.N. Breshchinskii, "Zhitie Korniliia Vygovskogo Pakhomievskoi redaktsii (teksty)," in *Drevnerusskaia knizhnost': Po materialam Pushkinskogo doma* (Leningrad: Nauka, 1985), 68-70. For the negative image of Kapiton in the polemic literature of the official church: *Poslaniia blazhennago Ignatiia, mitropolita Sibirskago i Tobol'skago* (Kazan: v tipografii Gubernskago pravleniia, 1857), 96-100.

## CHAPTER II. The Birth of the Language of “Schism”

In 1666, at the opening of the Moscow Church Council, the Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich addressed its participants with a speech highlighting the appearance of “schisms” in the Russian Church and his commitment to overcome them: “The master of heaven sowed the field of our Orthodox state with the wheat of pure piety, but the envious enemy sowed the soul-harming chaff while we, whom God obligated to guard [the wheat], were asleep; if your zeal will not eradicate and extrude [the chaff], the wheat will be severely harmed unless it is cleaned.”<sup>125</sup> The Tsar explained further that by the wheat he meant “veritable God’s Word, planted in our lands at the beginning by the Apostle St [Andrew] the First-Called and by the preaching of Saints Cyril and Methodius,”<sup>126</sup> while the chaff referred to “the soul-harming chaff of the *schisms* sowed by Devil.”<sup>127</sup>

The Council named the specific people responsible for the “schisms”: the archpriest Avvakum Petrov, the priest Nikita Dobrynin, the deacon Fedor Ivanov, the hegumen Feoktist, and others. The Acts of the Moscow Church Council labeled them “the newly appeared *schismatics* and mutineers” and continued to apply this term to them throughout the text.<sup>128</sup> Later, these people became known in the Russian historical narrative as the founders of the “Russian Schism” (*Russkii Raskol*), the collective name for all of the opponents of Nikon’s “corrections.” The initial history of the concept was rather complicated, though. First, notwithstanding the Moscow Council’s Acts the term “schismatic” was not the dominant label in the church hierarchy’s discursive attack on the Nikon’s critics. It took decades for it to become a full-bodied concept specific to the Russian

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<sup>125</sup> *Deianiia Moskovskikh Soborov 1666 i 1667 godov*, ed. by N.I. Subbotin (Westmead, England: Gregg International Publishers Limited, 1969), fol. 10 v.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 10 v.-11

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 11.

<sup>128</sup> See also countless accusations of “church schisms” directed against the disobedient clergy in other documents of the Council: *Materialy dlia istorii raskola*, t. 2, ch. 2 (1876), 5-34.

historical context. Second, it was not based on canon law as much as it was rooted in the Russian ecclesiastical polemical tradition. The story of the appearance of the term “schismatic” demonstrates that rather than a theological debate over definitions of dissidence it was an affirmation of power, or, to be more exact, a denunciation of disobedience to authority.

The two principal works that determined the seventeenth-century polemics around the new liturgical books appeared already in 1666-1667. First, in May-July of 1666, the tract called *The Rod of Rulership* (*Zhezl pravleniia*), printed in the same year at Moscow Printing house in more than a thousand copies, appeared. Second, sometime in 1667 *The Tale of the Holy Council of 1666* (*Skazanie o sviatom sobore 1666 goda*), also known as the Acts of the Moscow Church Council of 1666, came out.<sup>129</sup> These works defined the circle of dissenters, provided a general framework of the polemic and outlined its vocabulary.

Both of the books explicitly claimed to be the work of the Moscow Church Council, even though its actual author is well known. It was Simeon Polotskii (1629-1680), an ecclesiastical writer and poet of Belarusian origin, who had risen to the heights of the Muscovite royal court thanks to the “schismatic” affair.<sup>130</sup> Polotskii had written *The Rod of Rulership* completely by himself on order of the Tsar, while in case of *The Tale of the Holy Council of 1666* he transcribed,

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<sup>129</sup> The full title of *The Tale of the Holy Council of 1666* in its final version is: *Skazanie o sviatom sobore poveleniem blagochestiveishago, tishaishago, samoderzhavneishago, velikago gosudaria, tsaria i velikago kniazia Alekseia Mikhailovicha, vseia Velikiia i Malyia i Belyia Rosii samoderzhitsa, v tsarstvuiushchem preimenitom i bogospasaemom grade Moskve na novoiavl'shiesia raskol'niki i miatezhniki sviatyiia pravoslavnokafolicheskiia tserkve sovokuplennom, v leto 7174*.

<sup>130</sup> On the creation of *The Rod of Rulership* see: *Materialy dlia istorii raskola*, t. 9, ch. 1 (1894), 8-9. The book was printed for the first time sometime between February and July 1667: A.S. Demin, “‘Zhezl pravleniia’ i aforistika Simeona Polotskogo,” in *Simeon Polotskii i ego knigoizdatel'skaia deiatel'nost'* (Moscow: Nauka, 1982), 65-66. Simeon Polotskii's contribution to the debate about the “corrected” books is difficult to overestimate. As Georg Michels noted, Simeon Polotskii had the leading role in the formation of the concept of “schismatic” known to us today: “Polotskii's views greatly influenced how seventeenth-century churchmen were to view, and then describe, contemporary religious realities” (Georg Bernhard Michels, *At War with the Church*, 113).

edited, and in large part directly authored the discourses of the Council's participants. The evidence of Polotskii's authorship is direct: remarks in the margins of the first draft of *The Tale of the Holy Council of 1666* unequivocally demonstrate his intensive work as its author and editor. The Tsar's speech had certainly been his creation from beginning to end.<sup>131</sup> Since neither of the two aforementioned books identified an individual author, they should not be treated as Polotskii's personal opinion on the matter, but rather as a representation of the state and church position.

*The Rod of Rulership* and *The Tale of the Holy Council of 1666*, in their turn, were a response to a set of polemical writings that denounced the changes in liturgical books and uncovered fallacies on the part of the book correctors. The priest Ivan Neronov, the archpriest Avvakum Petrov, the priests Nikita Dobrynin, Lazar' of Suzdal' and some others were among the most active of the oppositionist authors.

Participants in the debates about Nikon's changes in the church rituals frequently resorted to biblical quotations, parallels, and, metaphors. We should not assume that Simeon Polotskii or any other church polemicist of the era was a rationalist who cynically used religious arguments in order to justify the repression of ignorant masses. We should rather suppose that he, as well as his fellows and counterparts shared a conviction in the God-given nature of social order and power structure of their time.<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> The first draft of *The Tale of the Holy Council of 1666* written by Polotskii's hand is preserved in: *Rossiiskaia gosudarstvennaia biblioteka*, Otdel rukopisei, f. 173.1, no. 68 (Sbornik sochinenii Paisiia Ligarida, Simeona Polotskogo i Sil'vestra Medvedeva. 1666-1681 gg.), ff. 136-162. The text is cited by the publication of the final version of *The Tale of the Holy Council of 1666: Materialy dlia istorii raskola*, t. 2, ch. 2 (1876), 49-144.

<sup>132</sup> In this case I follow Quentin Skinner's rules of interpretation that help us to analyze the intentions of the author from the past. The first rule is: "It follows that whatever intentions a given writer may have, they must be conventional intentions in the strong sense that they must be recognizable *as* intentions to uphold some particular position in argument, to contribute in a particular way to the treatment of some particular theme, and so on. It follows in turn that to understand what any given writer may have been *doing in* using some particular concept or argument, we need first of all to grasp the nature and range of things." Second rule is follows: "focus on the writer's mental world, the world of his empirical beliefs." Quentin Skinner, "Motives, Intentions and the Interpretation of Texts," in *New Literary History*, vol. 3, no. 2: On Interpretation: I (Winter, 1972), 406-407. (Here, italics for emphasis are author's).



Even though both supporters and opponents of Nikon's corrections initially employed the same ecclesiastical language and used a common range of literary references, their intentions differed significantly. The polemicists representing the official Church especially frequently referred to two biblical metaphors, of the good pastor and of the wheat and the chaff. They situated the conflict over the new books in the context of the universal battle between good and evil. Essentially, they reaffirmed the authority of the official hierarchy the dissenters were challenging when they doubted the correctness of the Patriarch Nikon's decisions. Therefore, it was presented not as a conflict over "corrections" but a rebellion against lawful authority, the Church, and God himself.

### **On the Good Pastor and the Wolves**

Already in its foreword *The Tale of the Holy Council of 1666* places the events unfolding in its time in cosmological and historical contexts. It argues that Satan—the serpent described in the Apocalypse, is behind all of the Church's distress in the past as well as in the present. The "pious tsars" (*blagochestivye tsari*) and the church fathers gathered at the ecumenical councils historically had defended the Holy Church against Satan's agents – the "apostate heretics" Arius, Nestorius, and others; now it is the turn of the Russian tsar and the contemporary Orthodox the hierarchs to stand up against the "newly appeared schismatics" (*novoiavl'shiesia raskol'niki*).<sup>133</sup> *The Tale of the Holy Council of 1666* concludes the lengthy foreword with a statement likening church hierarchs gathered in Moscow for the Church Council to "good shepherds" called on by the Tsar "to defeat the predatory wolves."<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>133</sup> *Skazanie o sviatom sobore*, 52-60. The same argument see also in: *Zhezl pravleniia* (Moscow: Sinodal'naia tipografiia, 1753), l. 36. "Recognition" of the ancient "heresies" in the contemporary ecclesiastical dissent is exceedingly common in the Christian polemical tradition.

<sup>134</sup> *Skazanie o sviatom sobore*, 60-61.

Similarly, *The Rod of Rulership* directly framed the “newly appeared schismatics” with the Gospel story about the good shepherd. The imaginary collective author of the tract identified himself with Jesus Christ and the opponents with the “thief” from the parable: “We ought to label them the way Christ the Savior himself chose to call them when he said: He that enters not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbs up some other way, he is a thief and a robber.” “Who gave them the blessing to do so?” inquired *The Rod of Rulership*, and pointed unequivocally to the Satan himself. It is “his will that they fulfill” and “on his advice [they are] rending the unity of the Church,” claimed the treatise.<sup>135</sup>

The image of the flock and the wolves’ menace to it was widespread in Russian ecclesiastical literature since earliest times. It originates from the numerous biblical allegorical oppositions of the faithful and their foes.<sup>136</sup> It suited well the polemical discourse against the opponents of Nikon’s changes, too.<sup>137</sup> The parable of the good shepherd, developed in the Gospel of John, starts from shepherd’s juxtaposition to a robber. The parable says: “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that enters not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbs up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep” (John 10, 1-2). In the interpretation of this parable Jesus explains to his disciples that he himself is the shepherd, without whom the flock is destined to the distraction by the predatory wolf:

I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd gives his life for the sheep. But he that

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<sup>135</sup> *Zhezl pravleniia*, ll. 10-10 ob.

<sup>136</sup> V.P. Adrianova-Peretts, *Ocherki poeticheskogo stilia Drevnei Rusi* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Akademii nauk SSSR, 1947), 95-102.

<sup>137</sup> Nikon’s close associate and a book corrector, Epifanii Slavinskii (d. 1675), opens his polemical treatise against the critics of the changes in liturgical books with their comparison to the wolf in the sheep skin. This treatise, which survived only in several manuscript copies from the end of the seventeenth century, is undated. However, considering that it has no reference to such decisive event as the Moscow Church Council of 1666-1667, the appearance of Epifanii’s work should rather be attributed to a period before 1666. See the text and its analysis in: T.V. Panich, “Slovo ‘Na nepokorniki tserkvi’ – pamiatnik rannei antistarobriadcheskoi polemiki,” in *Obshchestvennoe soznanie naseleniia Rossii po otechestvennym narrativnym istochnikam XVI-XX vv.*, ed. by N.N. Pokrovskii (Novosibirsk: Izdatel'stvo SO RAN, 2006), 158-180.

is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, sees the wolf coming, and leaves the sheep, and flees: and the wolf catches them, and scatters the sheep (John 10, 11-12).

*The Rod of Rulership's* author reinforced the metaphor of the shepherd in its very name and in the design of the title page: the drawing of an episcopal staff with two snake heads at its top end opened the treatise. Formally the book was meant to refute the works of Nikita Dobrynin and priest Lazar', both of whom actively opposed the changes introduced to liturgical books during the time of Nikon's patriarchate.<sup>138</sup> The two parts of *The Rod of Rulership* were titled respectively: "Denunciation of Nikita" (folios 14-69 v.) and "Denunciation of Lazar'" (folios 70-123 v.). However, Simeon Polotskii fashioned *The Rod of Rulership* as a continuation of the book *The Tablet (Skrizhal')*, the pinnacle of Nikon's liturgical changes. The *The Rod of Rulership's* appearance symbolized the completion of these changes as a metaphorical fulfillment of the new tabernacle of the Orthodox Church.<sup>139</sup>

*The Rod of Rulership* proclaimed its goals as two-fold: on the one hand, to rule the Church's flock, and to beat the ones who threatened it, on the other. These goals were formulated in the very name of the book, printed in syllabic verse:

"Rod of  
rulership: for the rulership of the thinking flock of the Russian Orthodox Church;  
strengthening: for the strengthening of the ones who hesitate in their faith;  
punishment: for the punishment of unruly sheep;

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<sup>138</sup> *Skazanie o sviatom sobore*, 111. More about priest Lazar' see: A.M. Panchenko, "Lazar'," in *Slovar' knizhnikov i knizhnosti Drevnei Rusi* (henceforth - SKKDR), vyp. 3, ch. 2 (St. Petersburg: Izdatel'stvo Dmitrii Bulanin, 1993), 214-217.

<sup>139</sup> *Zhezl pravleniia*, l. 11.

execution: *for the execution of stiff-necked and predatory wolves attacking Christ's flock.*”<sup>140</sup>

The last line obviously referred to Christ's parable of the good shepherd, included into the Gospel of John. Yet, the epigram to the book also appealed to the Old Testament roots of the shepherd metaphor: the two Psalms (7 and 109/110) cited on the second page told about the “rod of iron” God gave to King David in order to strike his enemies.<sup>141</sup> The references to the Old Testament figures and their victories served *The Rod of Rulership's* argument better than rather non-violent message of the Gospel.

### **The Rod of Power**

*The Rod of Rulership's* preface gave a further detailed explanation of the meaning of book's name: the rod metaphor. It explained the biblical meaning of the “rod” on several levels. The first function of the “rod” - “rulership” - was, following the evangelical symbolism, to “uproot the chaff of heresies, and sow the wheat of God's word on the field of hearts.”<sup>142</sup> The second rod in *The Rod of Rulership's* narrative, the “rod of strengthening,” was supposed to “strengthen the ones who hesitate in their faith” in the same way as God proved the primacy of Aaron's priesthood. According to the Book of Numbers, Korah, Dathan, Abiram, and other Israelites disagreed with the fact that Aaron was the highest priest of Israel and rose against him. In a set of miraculous events God destroyed some of Aaron's opponents; others were disgraced after Aaron's rod flourished with buds and flowers proving the primacy of his priesthood (Numbers 16-17).

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<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*, front page. (In the original handwritten copy of *The Rod of Rulership* - f. 77) Description of various editions of the “Staff of Rulership” see in: Zernova, *Knigi kirillovskoi pechati*, 96; Demin, ““Zhezl pravleniia” i aforistika Simeona Polotskogo,” 62-66

<sup>141</sup> *Zhezl pravleniia*, front page.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*, f. 2-2 v.

The reference to the story of Aaron's rod played an important role in *The Rod of Rulership's* narrative as it connected Polotskii's work to *The Tablet*. However, the two books used the reference differently. *The Tablet* likened Patriarch Nikon to Aaron, "the hierarch chosen by God" (*bogoizbrannyi sviaschennonachal'nik*) and promised a dreadful fate to all opponents of Nikon's "corrections."<sup>143</sup> *The Rod of Rulership* utilized the same Biblical story, however, without mentioning Nikon. It proclaimed Nikita Dobrynin, Lazar', Avvakum and other dissidents to be the new Korahs, Dathans, and Abirams who "defame God's hierarchs and create disarray and mutiny in Russian Church."<sup>144</sup> The new symbolical rod, the book called *The Rod of Rulership* itself, flourished with "beautiful flowers of the true teaching" and defended the "true hierarchs, righteous pastors and teachers" of the Russian Orthodox Church.<sup>145</sup> The hierarchs of Russian Orthodox Church gathered at the Council, and not the dethroned patriarch Nikon, collectively played the role of Aaron.

The third function of the metaphorical rod was to punish the "unruly sheep." *The Rod of Rulership's* author brought in the figure of the biblical prophet Moses to demonstrate the "keenness of pastor's punishment." He recalled the famous story from the Book of Exodus (7:10-12) when Moses's rod turned into a serpent and ate up the serpents of Egyptian sorcerers in front of the Egyptian Pharaoh.<sup>146</sup> The image and interpretation of Moses's rod turning into a serpent also gave the inspiration for the book's cover - an image of a "rod" with two serpents in place of its handle. The first serpent symbolized human sins, originating from the serpent of the Garden of Eden; the second serpent represented the "keenness of the pastor's punishment."<sup>147</sup>

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<sup>143</sup> *Skrizhal'*, f. 15.

<sup>144</sup> *Zhezl Pravleniia*, f. 4

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*, ff. 5 v.-6.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*

Describing the fourth rod, the “rod of execution,” *The Rod of Rulership* compared the Church Council to King David fighting Goliath.<sup>148</sup> Paradoxically, the persecuted dissidents Nikita Dobrynin, Lazar’ and others, described as “the newly appeared blasphemers and mutineers who tear to pieces the unity of the Orthodox faith,”<sup>149</sup> represented Goliath; the Moscow Church Council, therefore, personified David. Like David, who faced the giant with a shepherd’s rod and a rock, the Council met its opponents with own “pastoral rod,” i.e. the book itself, and the “imagined rock of Jesus Christ.”<sup>150</sup> Just like in the story with David and Goliath, *The Rod of Rulership* anticipated the victory of the Council over the Church’s enemies and subsequent dismemberment of their teaching.

Even though *The Rod of Rulership*’s title page directly referred to the Gospel’s parable of the good shepherd, the book’s narrative often relied on Old Testament references and symbolism. The reason for this lay in the aim of his polemical writing - to justify the uncompromising persecution of disobedient clergy. The patriarchal figures of Moses, Aaron, and King David suited this aim better than the image of Christ the redeemer.

### **Wolves of the Apocalypse**

The parable of the good shepherd allowed *The Rod of Rulership* to explain not only the role of the church hierarchy in the guarding of the Church’s flock, but also to clarify the nature of the opposition to Nikon’s “corrections.” *The Rod of Rulership* called upon the dissident Church’s sheep to return to their true pastors; the ones they were listening to were in fact the “soul-ruining

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<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*, ff. 7-7 v.

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*, f. 7 v.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*, ff. 7-7 ob. The allusion to the relation of Christ and a rock see in: Matthew 16:18 (“And I say also unto you, That you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it”).

wolves in sheep's clothing."<sup>151</sup> The disobedient clergymen, it claimed, were vain fame-seeking ignoramuses who did not understand the meaning of the Holy Scripture. But worse than that, they truly should be called "thiefs" for stealing the "talents given by God"<sup>152</sup> and "brigands" for "killing the souls of innocent people by their own evil teaching."<sup>153</sup> Essentially, in attacks on the church, *The Rod of Rulership* argued, archpriest Avvakum, priest Nikita, and others carried out the will and desire of Satan himself.<sup>154</sup>

*The Tale of the Holy Council of 1666* also framed the disobedient clergy as deliberate participants in the Devil's plot against the Holy Church. Viewing the protest from this angle even allowed it to liken archpriest Avvakum and his fellows to Martin Luther, John Calvin, and other "apostates." *The Tale* exclaimed:

Ever since the seven-headed serpent was fully defeated by the seven holy ecumenical councils, he is moaning and wailing bitterly, since he cannot win against the God's Church; however, he dares to send out his warriors: he instructs how to fight and arms with Satanic armor *Luthers, Calvins, and other apostates like them*. The Cerberus of the underworld is howling because he can neither destroy the Church, nor even wound it; he is not willing to stop barking, however. That is why, *in our last times*, [Satan] acquired inside the Church's fence the willing vessels, *the sons of perdition*, [and] taught them how to bark at the radiant bride, dressed in the sun of truth, Christ's Church, and the dogs are barking in vain, because they see nothing dark in her, but only seem to see, [so they are barking] in order to please their master – the serpent, to whom they have submitted.<sup>155</sup>

As a result, *The Rod of Rulership* and *The Tale of the Holy Council of 1666* achieved a very

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<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*, f. 8 v. Compare with: Matthew 7:15 ("Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves").

<sup>152</sup> Compare to the parable of the talents (Matthew 25:14-30).

<sup>153</sup> *Zhezl pravleniia*, f. 10.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 8 v.-9. See the same theme in: *Skazanie o sviatom sobore*, 121-122.

<sup>155</sup> *Skazanie o sviatom sobore*, 58-59.

important task: they accorded the opponents of the changes introduced by Nikon a status more important than just disaffected and vocal clergymen. Priests Avvakum Petrov, Nikita Dobrynin, Lazar' of Murom and others represented the Devil's conspiracy against the Orthodox Church. Therefore, labeling their actions as leading to "schisms" meant more than an attempt to split the church flock: the disobedient clergy's disagreement with the hierarchy represented an encroachment on the very existence of the Holy Church. This seemingly stylistic shift is essential for understanding the seventeenth-century notion of "schism."

The quote cited above mentioned one more theme that was important for the polemicists on both sides: the one of apocalyptic expectations. *The Tale of the Holy Council of 1666* pointed out that the protest against the liturgical changes takes place in "the last days" (*v nasha posledniaia vremena*). Similarly, *The Rod of Rulership* directly connected the "newly appeared schismatics" to Christ's prophecy of his second coming. "Christ the Savior himself orders us to watch out from them," said the polemic treatise, "in Matthew, in chapter 24: Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not. For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets" (Matthew 24:23-24).<sup>156</sup>

The appeal to the biblical metaphor of the good shepherd guarding the flock from wolves also had significant apocalyptic connotations. In particular, the Apostle Paul warned believers about the last times with the following words:

For I know this, that after my departing shall *grievous wolves* enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, *to draw away disciples after them*. (Acts 20:29-30)

"Therefore watch," the Apostle Paul alerted his followers (Acts 20:31), which directly corresponded to Christ's own prophesy about the second coming: "Take heed that no man *deceive*

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<sup>156</sup> *Zhezl pravleniia*, f. 9.



you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall *deceive* many” (Matthew 24:4-5). The Apostle Paul’s 2<sup>nd</sup> epistle to Thessalonians again warned the faithful of the danger of deception in the last days in similar terms: “Let no man *deceive* you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, *the son of perdition*” (2 Thess. 2:3).

The documents of the official Church readily employed the apocalyptically charged language against the opponents of the new books. The Church Council imputed exactly that-- “deception” and “false teachings” -- to archpriest Avvakum and other disobedient clergymen. The 4<sup>th</sup> of the Council’s acts, for example, insisted that even after being punished for “schisms, mutinies, and false teachings,” Avvakum “has not stopped spreading his evil thinking and *false teachings* orally and in writing and *deceiving* simple children [of the Church], tearing them away from unity... with the Church.”<sup>157</sup>

Analogously, Ivan Neronov, one of the protest leaders, also dramatically called on his supporters in 1654 to “watch out” for the “evil doers” who introduced the new rites into the Russian Church.<sup>158</sup> Apparently, awareness of the imminent end of the world prevailed on both sides of the debate about the new liturgical books and raised the importance of the changes to cosmological scale. By comparing the disobedient clerics with the predatory wolves, church polemicists portrayed the heated discussion as a defense of the Holy Church against the Devil’s plot. As a result, it allowed the church hierarchs to appear to the reader in the role of the good shepherds of the Christ’s flock instead of the oppressors and torturers of the fellow Christians.

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<sup>157</sup> *Skazanie o sviatom sobore*, 81.

<sup>158</sup> “Poslanie Neronova ko vsej bratii, otpravlennoe iz Vologdy v Moskvu 13 iulia 1654 g.,” in *Materialy dlia istorii raskola*, t. 1 (1875), 121-122.

## “Schismatics” in the Canon Law

Deacon Feodor Ivanov (d. 1682), one of the so-called “schismatics” tried by the Church Council in 1666, exclaimed against his judges in one of his later writings: they “call us by their own name, *schismatics*, and damn us out of their own rage, not by the rules of holy fathers. It is written in the holy rules, that *the baptism performed by the schismatic or para-synagogue is accepted*. [Thus]... even if we were really schismatics in faith, schismatics and para-synagogues should not be excluded from the Church, nor repudiated, nor anathematized, if even their baptism is accepted.”<sup>159</sup> Deacon Feodor’s accusations correctly pointed out the fact that in the classification of the protests against Nikon’s “corrections,” canon law was ambiguous.

The ecclesiastical notion of “schismatic,” just like other categories of spiritual crimes, is rooted in the canon law. Since the dawn of Orthodox Christianity in Russia local church authorities relied on Byzantine ecclesiastical legislation and civil laws related to church affairs, widely circulated in the handwritten copies. Canon law had finally appeared in printed form in Russia in the first half of the seventeenth century. In 1639 the Moscow printing house published a selection of canon law (90 folios long), under the name of *Nomocanon* (*Nomokanon*), as a supplement to *The Book of Needs*, or *Euchologion* (*Potrebnik*). It was a reprint of the Slavic translation of the fifteenth-century Greek compilation titled *Νομοκανών* (in Greek νομος means “law,” κανων – “rule”), published thrice in Kyiv in 1620s.<sup>160</sup> This book was designed as a manual for confessors; therefore, for the most part it just listed penalties for different types of deviations from a Christian moral code. Among other things, it prohibited righteous believers to interact with heretics, pagans, Jews, Roman Catholics (*latiny*), Muslims (*agariane*), and some others, yet did not provide any

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<sup>159</sup> Feodor Ivanov, “Poslanie iz Pustozerska k synu Maksimu” (1678-1679), in *Materialy dlia istorii*, t. 6, ch. 3 (1881), 201.

<sup>160</sup> A.S. Pavlov, *Nomokanon pri Bol'shom Potrebnike. Ego istoriia i teksty, grecheskii i slavianskii, s ob'iasnitel'nymi i kriticheskimi primechaniiami* (Moscow: Tipografiia G.Lissnera i A.Geshelia, 1897), 3-7, 53-64.

explanation about who they were. The category of “schismatic” did not appear in *Nomokanon* at all.<sup>161</sup>

Soon, however, a more comprehensive edition of canon law saw the light of the day in Moscow. In 1649-53 officers of the printing house translated and compiled the collection of canon law under the title *The Pilot Book (Kormchaia kniga)*.<sup>162</sup> It defined three types of major criminals against the Church: heretics (*eretiki*), schismatics (*raskol'niki*), and “para-synagogues” (*podtserkovniki*, from Greek παρασυναγωγή).<sup>163</sup> According to the first regulation of St Basil the Great, “schismatics” were those “who set themselves aside from the Church.”<sup>164</sup> Under “para-synagogues” the regulation understood “schismatics” or other “unruly” (*nepokorivii*) believers who had created a separate church assembly. “Heretics,” on the other hand, were the ones who “completely alienated themselves from God’s faith.”<sup>165</sup> Therefore, the difference between these ecclesiastical crimes was substantial: schismatics and para-synagogues rebel against the Church without challenging its fundamental teachings, while heretics confront the faith itself and thus are alien to God as well as the Church. This drastic difference in three categories manifested itself in St Basil’s command to re-baptize converted heretics; at the same time, schismatics and para-

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<sup>161</sup> See in: *Potrebnik inocheskoj* (Moscow: Pechatnyi dvor, 1639).

<sup>162</sup> About the preparation of *The Pilot Book* for publishing in 1649-1653 see: E.V. Beliakova, “K voprosu o pervom izdanii Kormchei knigi,” in *Vestnik tserkovnoi istorii*, no. 1 (2006), 131-150; Idem., “Istochniki pechatnoi Kormchei,” in *Vestnik tserkovnoi istorii*, no. 3 (2008), 99-115; Pozdeeva, Pushkov, and Dadykin, *Moskovskii pechatny dvor*, 276, cit. 34

<sup>163</sup> *Kormchaia* (Moscow: Pechatnyi dvor, 1653), ff. 224-225 v.

The earliest Slavic *The Pilot Book (Kormchaia)* written in Old Slavonic operated only by two categories - heresy (*eres'*) and schism (*raspria*) (see: V. N. Beneshevich, *Drevneslavianskaia kormchaia XIV titulov bez tolkovanii = Syntagma XIV titulorum sine scholiis secundum versionem palaeoslovenicam, adjecto texto graeco e vetustissimis codicibus manuscriptis exerato*, t. 1 (St. Petersburg: Tipografiia Imperatorskoi Akademii nauk, 1906), 461-462). See also: “Maksima inoka sviatogorskago slovo otvetno Nikolaiu Latynianinu,” in *Sochineniia prepodobnago Maksima Greka, izdannye pri Kazanskoi dukhovnoi akademii*, ch. 1 (Kazan: Tipografiia Gubernskago pravleniia, 1859), 528

<sup>164</sup> *Kormchaia*, f. 225.

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid.*, f. 224 v.

synagogues were not obliged to go through the same procedure, because their crimes involved form rather than substance.<sup>166</sup>

Feodor was not completely right; the church hierarchy did in fact appeal to canon law and its interpretation of the categories of spiritual crime. Even though the Council frequently pronounced the opponents of Nikon's changes to be "*schismatics*," first of all in the documents edited and written by Polotskii, it employed other canonical categories, too. In July 1666 the Church Council issued a warning to the ones "discordant with the Holy Eastern Church" promising excommunication (*otluchenie*) should they continue to disobey church authorities by refusing the newly printed liturgical books. "Those present-day adversaries, who are at the Solovetskii monastery, or anywhere else, should be called para-synagogues (*podtserkovnitsy*) in accordance with Vasilii the Great," the document read, "since [they] disobey the Holy Catholic Eastern Church, and abandon it, and do not wish to be in consent with it, but wish always to live according to their own free will."<sup>167</sup> A year later the newly elected Patriarch Ioasaf (1667-1672) repeated the warning again using the category of "para-synagogues."<sup>168</sup>

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<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*, ff. 225-225 v. Another part of *The Pilot Book*, the 33rd and 34th regulations of the Council of Laodicea, also stressed heretical alienation from God (*Ibid.*, ff. 79-79 v.). Regulations of the Council of Carthage used the metaphor of "cutting" while describing the heretics known as Donatists - they not only "cut themselves off from the Church" but also were "cut off from the God's body and tied by the deception." The same Council interpreted the conversion of Donatists to the "truth" as the "return from the Devil's capture" (*Ibid.*).

<sup>167</sup> "Sobornoe povelenie o priniatii novoispravlennykh knig i chinov, poslannoe v Solovetskii monastyr' s arkhimandritom Sergiem. 1666 g. Iiul'," in *Materialy dlia istorii raskola*, t. 3, ch. 3 (1878), 121.

The church hierarchs had brought the *The Pilot Book* and particularly St. Basil's commands into the discussion of the highly debated question of the rebaptism of converts from Catholicism. Muscovite polemicists and theologians traditionally took an uncompromising position towards Roman Catholicism. The Union of 1595 and the Polish-Lithuanian invasion during the Time of Trouble (1605-1613) escalated the situation to the extreme level of Apocalyptic expectations. As a result, the Moscow Church Council of 1636 ordered the rebaptism of Catholics converted to Eastern Orthodoxy. The Moscow Church Council of 1666-1667 held the opposite position on this question. "It is not appropriate to baptize again the ones turning from the Latins to the Holy Apostolic Eastern Church," the Council concluded. Instead they should be anointed with chrism since their baptism "is performed in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." "Kniga sobornykh deianii," in *Materialy dlia istorii raskola*, t. 2, ch. 2 (1876), 351, 357.

<sup>168</sup> "Patriarskii nakaz v Solovetskii monastyr' o priniatii arkhimandrita Iosifa i podchinenii sobornym postanovleniiam. 1667 goda iulia 23," in *Materialy dlia istorii raskola*, t. 3, ch. 3 (1878), 205-206.

However, in May 1667 the Moscow Church Council toughened its language against the opponents of Nikon's changes. In the anathema, distributed country-wide as a supplement to the 1668 edition of *The Service Book* (*Sluzhebnik*), the Council members declared the dissidents to be equal to heretics, even though their crime was still disobedience to church authorities and not a deviation in teachings:

Whoever would not listen to our orders and would not submit to the Holy Eastern Church and to this Holy Council, or would contradict and oppose us, we with the authority given to us ... condemn and anathematize such an opponent as a *heretic* and a *rebel* and cut him off as a decayed and useless limb from the body, flock, and the God's Church, until he listens to reason and returns to the truth through repentance.<sup>169</sup>

Thus, deacon Feodor was correct pointing out the contradiction between the first rule of St. Basil the Great and the actions of the Church Council – if he and his fellow clergymen were truly “schismatics” or “para-synagogues” in canonical sense, the Council should not have anathematized them as if they were “heretics.” However, the canonical definitions of “heresy” and “schism” historically employed in Russian theological discourse were more convoluted. The Muscovite church hierarchs and polemicists relied on the tradition rooted in the church fathers, in which notions of “schism” and “heresy” were equally evil and interconnected.

### **The Parable of the Wheat and the Chaff**

The seventeenth-century language of ecclesiastical polemic was formed under the influence of the history of dealing with religious dissent as well as the whole range of events in

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<sup>169</sup> *Sluzhebnik* (Moscow: Pechatnyi dvor, 1668), ll. 7 ob.-8 (appendix). The same text is also published by the original copy in: *Materialy dlia istorii raskola*, t. 2, ch. 2 (1876), 218-220.

Muscovy and abroad. In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries Russian hierarchs faced a challenge in the face of several “heresies,” namely “*strigol’niks*” and “judaizers.” Since the second half of the sixteenth century theologians of the Russian Orthodox Church had to deal with the religious menace from the West. The Union of Brest of 1596 and the invasions of Catholic Poles during the Times of Trouble (1598-1613) strengthened the fear of the “Latin heretics.” At the same time, the anti-Protestant works of Ruthenian polemicists as well as direct contacts with the so-called “Luthorians” (the name for all of the Protestants commonly used in Muscovy) instilled in Muscovite ecclesiastical elite serious concerns about the danger of the Protestant Reformation.<sup>170</sup>

The theologians and polemicists framed the doctrinal as well as institutional challenges the Russian Orthodox Church faced in binary oppositions: true Orthodoxy vs. heresy.<sup>171</sup> Similarly, the seventeenth-century polemic around the new liturgical books fit into the existing terminological and semantic framework defined by the tradition and theological background. This tradition can be best explained on the example of the use of the metaphor of the wheat and the chaff.

First of all, it is necessary to stress that the terms “schism,” “heresy” and their derivations are fully subjective terms and should be used with quotation marks. “Heresy” can only exist in the presence of some sort of norm, or orthodoxy (from Greek words ὀρθός - correct, and δόξα – faith, opinion), enforced by an authority. “Heresy” can someday become the norm, and thus lose its “heretical” status, while orthodoxy can also lose its position as established truth. Similarly, the concept of “schism” assumes some sort of unity, against which a split or separation can take place.

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<sup>170</sup> More on the spread of Protestantism on Muscovy’s western borders and an Orthodox polemical reaction to it see in: Dmitriev, *Pravoslavie i reformatsiia. Reformatsionnye dvizheniia v vostochnoslavianskikh zemliakh Rechi Pospolitoi vo vtoroi polovine XVI veka* (Moscow: Izdatel’stvo MGU, 1990).

<sup>171</sup> Boris Uspenskii and Iurii Lotman defined Russian culture as essentially dualistic (Ju.M. Lotman, B.A. Uspenskij, “The Role of Dual Models in the Dynamics of Russian Culture,” in Idem., *The Semiotics of Russian Culture* (Ann Arbor: Michigan Slavic Publications, 1984), 3-35). Viktor Zhivov criticized this position for uncritical reception of the traditional clerical rigorism (Zhivov, “Dvoeverie i osobyi kharakter russkoi kul’turnoi istorii,” 306-316).

The decision whom to regard as a “schismatic” and whom as the remaining main body is arbitrary and relies on the presence of power to enforce the unity.

The problem of perceived dissidence in questions of faith existed since the dawn of Christianity - the parable of the wheat and the chaff from the New Testament, most vividly among other biblical metaphors provided an explanation to this phenomenon, the church fathers’ commentaries elucidated on it.<sup>172</sup> With the acceptance of the Gospel at the end of the tenth century Rus’ too faced a problem of religious deviation and received a biblical response to it.

The parable of the wheat and the chaff (or tares in some translations) appears only in the gospel of Matthew and in the deemed apocryphal gospel of Thomas. It tells a story of the sower who planted the seed of wheat and the enemy that planted chaff among it:

The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field: But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed chaff among the wheat, and went his way. But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the chaff also. So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, did not you sow good seed in thy field? from where then has it tares? He said unto them, An enemy has done this. The servants said unto him, Will you then that we go and gather them up? But he said, No; lest while you gather up the chaff, you root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather you together first the chaff, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn. (Matthew 13:24-30)

Jesus also gave an apocalyptic explanation to the Parable:

He that sows the good seed is the Son of man; The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the chaff is the children of the wicked one; The

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<sup>172</sup> On the interpretation of the parable by Callistus, Jerome, Augustine, and Origen see: Roland H. Bainton, “The Parable of the Tares as the Proof Text for Religious Liberty to the End of the Sixteenth Century,” in *Church History*, vol. 1, no. 2 (June, 1932), 68-71.

enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels. As therefore the chaff is gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world. (Matthew 13:37-40)

There were several commentaries on the parable important for Orthodox theology that warned the believers about the dangers of “heretical chaff,” yet cautioned against its premature annihilation. Among the most significant was the commentary of the fourth-century Byzantine hierarch and theologian St. John Chrysostom (347-407).<sup>173</sup> Chrysostom referred to the chaff as “the societies of heretics.”<sup>174</sup> He recognized in the existence of the “chaff” a portion of the Devil’s plot against the true faith, an attempt to seed an error in order to disturb the truth: “not having been able to carry away what had taken root, nor to choke, nor to scorch it up, he conspires against it by another craft, privily casting in his own inventions.”<sup>175</sup>

Considering the danger of the Devil and his secret manner of acting against the wheat of true believers, Chrysostom emphasized the responsibility of both the rulers and their subjects to oppose the Devil’s scheme. Yet, the rulers’ obligation is higher since to them God “especially has entrusted the keeping of the field.”<sup>176</sup>

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<sup>173</sup> Even though Chrysostom’s writings had been popular in Russia since eleventh century, “The Homilies on the Gospel of Matthew” (which included the commentary on the parable of the wheat and the chaff) were translated from Greek into Church Slavonic only in the beginning of sixteenth century by the theologian Maximos the Greek (1470-1555). He arrived to Muscovy in 1516 from the Monastery of Vatopedi on the Mount Athos. In the next century and a half following the translation Chrysostom’s “Homilies on the Gospel of Matthew” circulated among Muscovites in handwritten copies until it finally appeared in print in 1664. More on Maximos: Dimitri Obolensky, *Six Byzantine Portraits* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 201-219; D.M. Bulanin, “Maksim Grek,” in *Slovar’ knizhnikov i knizhnosti Drevnei Rusi*, vyp. 2, ch. 2 (Leningrad: Nauka, 1989), 89-98. About the translation of “The Homilies on the Gospel of Matthew”: A.I. Ivanov, *Literaturnoe nasledie Maksima Greka: Kharakteristika, atributsii, bibliografiia* (Leningrad: Nauka, 1969), 48-49. Handwritten copies of the Maximos’s translation see in: S. Belokurov, *O biblioteke moskovskikh gosudarei v XVI stoletii* (Moscow: Tipografiia A. Lissnera i A. Geshelia, 1898), no. 22, 69, 89, 90; Ioann Zlatoust, *Besedy na evangelista Matfeia* (Moscow: Pechatnyi dvor, 1664) (in two parts).

<sup>174</sup> Ioann Zlatoust, *Besedy na evangelista Matfeia*, ch. 2 (Moscow: Pechatnyi dvor, 1664), f. 1. English translation cited by: *The Homilies of St John Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople, on the Gospel of St. Matthew, Translated, With Notes and Indices*, part 2 (Oxford: John Henry Parker, 1844), Hom. XLVI, 628.

<sup>175</sup> Ioann Zlatoust, *Besedy na evangelista Matfeia*, ff. 1 v.-2 (*The Homilies of St John Chrysostom*, 629).

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*, f. 1 v.



Chrysostom warned against the physical extermination of “heretics,” though: not only because the wheat can be damaged together with the chaff, but also since “many may change and become wheat.”<sup>177</sup> Chrysostom still called for the present-day action against “heretics”: “for it is not right to put a heretic to death,” Chrysostom explained Jesus Christ’s interpretation of the parable, yet, “He doth not therefore forbid our checking heretics, and stopping their mouths, and taking away their freedom of speech, and breaking up their assemblies and confederacies.”<sup>178</sup>

Another important commentary on the parable came from another Byzantine hierarch and theologian Theophylact, Archbishop of Ohrid (1055-1107).<sup>179</sup> He compared the chaff to “heresies” and “evil thoughts,” which Devil himself planted in the Christian world and in people’s souls. Just like St. John the Chrysostom, Theophylact stressed that despite Devil’s intentions some of the “heretics” can become righteous in the future, therefore they should not be “cut down” prematurely: “God does not allow the heretics to be destroyed by wars, lest the righteous suffer and be destroyed along with them. Likewise, neither does God wish to cut down a man on account of his evil thoughts, lest the wheat be destroyed along with them.”<sup>180</sup> Theophylact put forward a famous example of the “chaff” that turned from Devil to God – St. Paul the Apostle, who was a persecutor of Christ’s followers prior to his conversion: “If, for example, Matthew had been cut

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<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.*, ff. 1 v.-3 v.

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.*, ff. 3 v.-4. (*The Homilies of St John Chrysostom*, 630-631).

<sup>179</sup> About Theophylact of Ohrid: Obolensky, *Six Byzantine Portraits*, 34-82. About the copies of the Theophylact’s commentaries on canonical Gospels circulated in Rus’ already in thirteenth-fourteenth centuries: N.B. Shelamanova, *Predvaritel’nyi spisok slaviano-russkikh rukopisei XI-XIV vv., khraniashchikhsia v SSSR (dlia Svodnogo kataloga rukopisei, khraniashchikhsia v SSSR, do kontsa XIV v. vkluchitel’no)* (Moscow: Nauka, 1966), no. 282, 503, 1246, 1320; L.P. Zhukovskaia, “Pamiatniki russkoi i slavianskoi pis’mennosti XI-XIV vv. v knigokhranilishchakh SSSR,” in *Sovetskoe slavianovedenie*, no. 1 (1969), 62. About the first printed edition of the Theophylact’s commentaries from 1649 see: A.S. Zernova, *Knigi kirillovskoi pechati*, 70

<sup>180</sup> Feofilakt, arkhiepiskop Bolgarskii, *Evangelie s tolkovaniem* (Moscow: Sinodal’naia tipografiia, 1756), f. 88 v. (Translation cited by: Theophylactus, of Ochrida, *The Explanation of the Holy Gospel According to St Matthew* (House Springs, Mo.: Chrysostom Press, 1992), 115).

down while he was a tare, the wheat of the word which was later to spring up from him would have been cut down with him.”<sup>181</sup>

Both, St. John Chrysostom’s and Theophylact’s commentaries stressed the diabolic nature of the “chaff of heresies,” while perpetuated the uncertainty in regard to what exactly should be done with them. The questions of the nature of punishment for church dissidents and who is responsible for its implementation became central for Russian theological discourse.

### *Metropolitan Fotii Against “Strigol’niks”*

At the end of the fourteenth century a dissident religious group known under the name of “*strigol’niks*,” appeared in the city of Pskov. All the information about them comes from vague ecclesiastical diatribes. Metropolitan of Kiev and all Rus’ Fotii (d. 1431) was one of the church hierarchs who denounced the followers of this mysterious teaching as “heretics” and “schismatics” (*raskol’niki*). In his September, 1416, letter to the members of the church flock in Pskov Fotii accused “*strigol’niks*” of “heresy” as they were “alienating themselves from the God’s law and Orthodoxy.”<sup>182</sup> Based on the “holy rules” he asserted that “*strigol’niks*” could not see “the light of the true Christ” because they were “darkened by the Devil’s deception and blinded by the spite of their own cunning.”<sup>183</sup> Fotii compared “*strigol’niks*” to the early “heretics”: Arius, Nestorius, Macedonius, and others, who had brought “hesitation, frenzy, reproach, and mutiny (*shatanie i neistovstvo i ukor i miatezh*) into the true Orthodox Christian faith and God’s Church.”<sup>184</sup> Fotii

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<sup>181</sup> *Ibid.*, f. 88 v.

<sup>182</sup> “Poslanie Mitropolita Fotiia vo Pskov protiv strigol’nikov” (September 23, 1416), in N.A. Kazakova, Ia.S. Lur’e (eds.), *Antifeodal’nye ereticheskie dvizheniia na Rusi XIV-nachala XVI veka* (Moscow; Leningrad: Izdatel’stvo Akademii nauk, 1955), 243. The publication of the same letter: *Russkaia istoricheskaia biblioteka, izdavaemaia Arkheograficheskoi komissiei*, t. 6 (St. Petersburg: Tipografiia Imperatorskoi Akademii nauk, 1880), 365-376. See also about Fotii’s letter in: A.I. Alekseev, *Religioznye dvizheniia na Rusi poslednei treti XIV-nachala XVI v.: strigol’niki i zhidovstvuiushchie* (Moscow: Indrik, 2012), 74-77.

<sup>183</sup> “Poslanie Mitropolita Fotiia vo Pskov,” 244.

<sup>184</sup> *Ibid.*, 244.

encouraged his flock to separate “*strigol’niks*” from themselves as one would separate “the chaff from the wheat.”<sup>185</sup>

However, Fotii’s letter does not really provide any detail about how “*strigol’niks*” defection in teaching compared with those of ancient “heretics” such as Arius. Instead, he collected a set of canons proving that either a cleric’s or a layman’s failure to submit to a church prelate for any, even righteous, reason is intolerable. It leads to a “schism” in the Church and, therefore, is worthy of condemnation and punishment equally with “heresy.”<sup>186</sup> “Just like a root of heretic chaff’s sprouts should be severed with a spiritual sword,” Fotii cited one of the rulings, “similarly we command to sever and reject the schismatics that begin to tear apart the body of Christ.”<sup>187</sup> Fotii brought in John Chrysostom’s homily on Ephesians to stress that “to make a *schism* in God’s Church is no less an evil than to fall into heresy.”<sup>188</sup> After all, the ideal proclaimed Jesus Christ himself--“One fold and one shepherd” (John 10:16)—should be realized, the metropolitan explained.<sup>189</sup>

A decade later, in another letter to his faithful flock in the city of Pskov Metropolitan Fotii repeated his call to separate themselves from the “heretics,” so that “in no way should they be allowed among you, just like chaff among wheat.” Fotii also urged the believers to bring the dissenters to the true faith through “punishments”; however, the metropolitan reserved, the

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<sup>185</sup> *Ibid.*, 246-247.

<sup>186</sup> *Ibid.*, 244-245.

<sup>187</sup> *Ibid.*, 245.

<sup>188</sup> “Poslanie Mitropolita Fotiia,” 246.

<sup>189</sup> *Ibid.*, 246. In his letter Metropolitan Fotii heavily relied on the canon law collection called “Syntagma,” assembled and commented a fourteenth-century Greek monk Matthew Blastares (Ματθαῖος Βλάσταρης). The “Syntagma” included a separate chapter dedicated to “schismatics,” in which the author argued that a “schism” is no less a crime than “heresy.” The wide circulation of the book in Muscovy had only begun in the first quarter of the seventeenth century and not even in Russian or Church Slavonic but in the fourteenth-century Serbian translation. The book was translated into Russian only at the end of the eighteenth century. V. Tsypin, “Alfavitnaia Sintagma,” in *Pravoslavnaia entsiklopediia*, t. 2 (Moscow: Tserkovno-nauchnyi tsentr “Pravoslavnaia entsiklopediia,” 2001), 63-64; M.V. Korogodina, “Sintagma Matfeia Vlastaria v Rossii v XVII v. i Epifanii Slavinetskii,” in *Kapterevskie chteniia: sbornik statei*, ed. by M.V. Bibikov, vol. 10 (Moscow: IVI RAN, 2012), 9-20.

dwellers of Pskov should use “corporal [punishment] and confinements, not the death penalty.”<sup>190</sup> The metropolitan reminded his flock in his denunciation of the “*strigol’nik* heresy” that the existence of church hierarchy is a God-given order passed through Holy Apostles “for the direction of humankind.”<sup>191</sup>

Similarities in the treatment of the “heresy of *strigol’niks*” and a “schism” of the opponents of Patriarch Nikon’s “corrections” are apparent. Following selected quotes from church fathers Fotii treated the categories of “schismatic” and “heretic” as comparable, even though he recognized substantial difference between the two. In this interpretation a “heretic” was at the same time a “schismatic” since he/she threatened the unity of the Church, while a “schismatic” was in a sense also a “heretic” as he/she endangered the Church. The problem in question with both categories of spiritual crimes was power and subordination, as “heretics” and “schismatics” rebelled against the God-given order in the united Church.

#### *Iosif Volotsky and “Judaizers”*

At the turn of the sixteenth century probably the most famous Russian anti-“heretical” tract appeared, called *The Book Against Heretics* (*Kniga na eretikov*), also known as *The Enlightener* (*Prosvetitel’*). Its author, hegumen and theologian Iosif Volotskii (d. 1515) was an active participant in the campaign against the so-called “judaizers’ heresy” (*eres’ zhidovstvuiushchikh*). In a debate with the Grand Prince Ivan III, who was reluctant to sanction capital punishment for “heretics,” seeing it as “sinful,” Volotskii successfully argued for their complete physical

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<sup>190</sup> “Poslanie Mitropolita Fotiia vo Pskov protiv strigol’nikov (i po drugim voprosam)” (September 23, 1427), in *Antifeodal’nye ereticheskie dvizheniia na Rusi*, 254.

<sup>191</sup> Ibid.

extermination.<sup>192</sup> *The Book Against Heretics* was Volotskii's major argument in the debate with the Grand Prince as well as others sharing his doubts and soon gained wide popularity among theologians and church polemicists.<sup>193</sup>

Volotskii's treatise opens with a reference to the parable of the wheat and the chaff and a statement of the diabolic character of all "heresies": "It should be known that the Devil has introduced numerous heresies throughout time, [he] has as well seeded in this universe numerous weeds of evil believes (*plevel zloveria*) through unlawful heresiarchs serving to him, all for the perversion (*prevrashchenie*) and confusion (*smushchenie*) of the true faith."<sup>194</sup> Further Volotskii dedicated an entire chapter of his work to argue for capital punishment for "heretics" that should come from the civil authorities.<sup>195</sup> Unsurprisingly, one of the pillars of his argument was Chrysostom's commentary on the parable of the wheat and the chaff that called upon harsh treatment of "heretics," however, without breaking Christ's prohibition on the complete annihilation of the "chaff." Volotskii had his own spin on the commentary: "it is not right to put a heretic to death," the author agreed with Christ and Chrysostom; yet, this rule only concerns church authorities, while secular powers, namely a tsar, princes, and civil judges, were obliged to act sternly.<sup>196</sup> "It is clear and truly known to everyone," Volotskii concluded the thirteenth chapter of *The Book Against Heretics*, "that it is right for prelates, and priests, and monks, and lay people...

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<sup>192</sup> Iosif Volotskii, "Poslanie arhimandritu Mitrofanu andronnikovskomu," in, *Poslaniia Iosifa Volotskogo*, ed. by Ia.S. Lur'e and A.A. Zimin (Moscow; Leningrad: Izdatel'stvo Akademii nauk SSSR, 1959), 175-178.

<sup>193</sup> More on "judaizers," Iosif Volotskii, and his works see in: Ia.S. Lur'e, "Iosif Volotskii," in *SKKDR*, vyp. 3, ch. 2 (1993), 434-439; *Poslaniia Iosifa Volotskogo*, 3-97; A.I. Alekseev, *Sochineniia Iosifa Volotskogo v kontekste polemiki 1480-1510-kh gg.* (St. Petersburg: Rossiiskaia natsional'naia biblioteka, 2010); Idem., *Religioznye dvizheniia na Rusi*, 211-503; David Goldfrank, "Litigious, Pedagogical, Redemptive, Lethal: Iosif Volotskii's Calculated Insults," *Russian Review*, vol. 75, issue 1 (2016), 86-106.

<sup>194</sup> Iosif, igumen Volotskii, *Prosvetitel', ili oblichenie eresii zhidovstvuiushchikh* (Kazan: Tipografiia Imperatorskogo universiteta, 1882), 1.

<sup>195</sup> *Ibid.*, 297-313.

<sup>196</sup> Volotskii used an interesting logical explanation in support of his interpretation: "Would [Chrysostom] suppose tsars, and princes, and civil judges [in his commentary], he would say it is not right for tsars, and princes, and judges to put heretics to death." *Ibid.*, 301.

to denounce and condemn heretics and apostates, while it is right for tsars, and princes, and civil judges to imprison those and put [them] to the cruel punishments.”<sup>197</sup>

### *Muscovite Polemicists Against Martin Luther*

In the middle of the sixteenth century Muscovy saw another “heretic” trial - over a layman called Matvei Bashkin and his associates. A contemporary commentator, the author of *The History of the Grand Prince of Moscow (Istoriia o velikom kniaze Moskovskom)*,<sup>198</sup> described the Bashkin’s heresy as an “offspring of the Luthorian heresies” (*otrody eresei liutorskikh*) that grew in Orthodox Muscovy just as “chaff among pure wheat.”<sup>199</sup>

*The History*’s interpretation of the Muscovy authorities’ fight against the “heresy” stressed the major points of the parable and its interpretations. It first praised the energetic measures of both ecclesiastical and civil authorities against the “heretics”: “The Metropolitan of Moscow, following the orders of the tsar, ordered the arrest of those blasphemers (*rugateli*) everywhere in order to scrutinize them about their *schisms*, which disturbed the Church.” However, “even though it started well, this affair ended badly,” the author of the story exclaimed. The authorities not only “cut off the holy wheat together with the chaff” (particularly, the former Troitse-Sergiev monastery hegumen Artemii),<sup>200</sup> but also brought about “mercilessness and ferocious torment of those *schismatics*, who were worthy of pastoral correction.”<sup>201</sup> Evidently, the disagreement the author

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<sup>197</sup> *Ibid.* “The holy apostles have said about tsars and princes that they accepted their power from God the Lord for the vengeance on villains and for the praise of the ones doing good.” *Ibid.*

<sup>198</sup> Traditionally, the authorship of *The History of the Grand Prince of Moscow* is ascribed to Russian nobleman and political emigre Andrei Kurbskii (1528-1583). However, this question has not yet been settled: Sergey Bogatyrev, “Normalizing the Debate about Kurbskii?” in *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, no. 4, vol. 13 (Fall 2012), 951-954.

<sup>199</sup> “Istoriia o velikom kniaze Moskovskom,” in *Biblioteka literatury Drevnei Rusi*, ed. by D.S. Likhachev, L.A. Dmitriev, A.A. Alekseev, N.V. Ponyrko, t. 11 (St. Petersburg: Nauka, 2001), 462.

<sup>200</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>201</sup> *Ibid.*

of *The History of the Grand Prince of Moscow* had with the Muscovy authorities was grounded in St. John Chrysostom's exegesis of the parable of the wheat and the chaff, which called for the fierce yet cautious repression of the "heretical chaff."

As seen in the quotations above, *The History of the Grand Prince of Moscow* operated with the categories of "schism" and "schismatic" alongside "heresy" and "heretic." It did not contrast them, as in the canonical first rule of St. Basil; instead, in *The History* these categories of spiritual crime were directly connected – the "heretics" are in fact "schismatics," because they spread "schisms, which disturbed the Church."<sup>202</sup> The book's author has built upon a long existing tradition.

Even though it is doubtful that the events in the Russian Church described in *The History of the Grand Prince of Moscow* had any relation to the teachings of Martin Luther, it is important to stress that its author was seriously concerned with the dispersion of "Lutherian heresies" in the Orthodox lands. It is true that at the end of the sixteenth and beginning of the seventeenth centuries Protestant ideas began to gain influence in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, especially among the nobility.<sup>203</sup> At the same time, the threat of the "Latin heresy" spurred even more serious anxiety among the proponents of Eastern Orthodoxy in the region. As it has been already mentioned, in 1595 in the town of Brest the hierarchy of the Orthodox Metropolia of Kiev and Roman Catholic Church signed the so-called Union of Brest, propelling the Orthodox population of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth to accept the authority of the Pope while maintaining old rituals. Many Orthodox adherents did not agree with the Union.<sup>204</sup>

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<sup>202</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>203</sup> Dmitriev, *Pravoslavie i Reformatsiia*.

<sup>204</sup> See the discussion on the confessional situation in the end of the sixteenth-beginning of the seventeenth centuries in: Frank E. Sysyn, "Orthodoxy and Revolt: The Role of Religion in the Seventeenth-century Ukrainian Uprising Against the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth," in *Religion and the Early Modern State: Views from China, Russia, and the West*, ed. by James D. Tracy and Marguerite Ragnow (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 154-184.

Orthodox theologians of the Polish-Lithuanian lands responded to the difficult confessional situation with a wave of anti-Protestant, anti-Union, and anti-Catholic polemic. Many of the polemical tracts found their way into Muscovy as Russian church hierarchs as well as civil authorities became increasingly concerned with what they perceived as a peril for their Orthodox co-believers. Two of the aforementioned books containing primarily works of Polish-Lithuanian polemicists, namely *The St. Cyril's Book* (*Kirillova kniga*) (1644) and *The Book about Faith* (*Kniga o vere*) (1648), not only denounced the “Latins,” the “Uniates,” and the “Lutherians,” but also were destined to play an important role in the debate about the Nikon’s liturgical changes.

The compilers of *The St. Cyril's Book* introduced the book with the syllabic verses, which explained its main objective as a polemical tool against “Jews and heretics,” that is “Romans, and Lutherians, and Calvinists.” This “excellent book,” verses continued, aimed to help the Orthodox Christians to “bar the [heretics’] unrighteous mouths” with the “holy fathers’ words for the disgrace of their numerous schisms.”<sup>205</sup>

Further, the compilers briefly explained to readers the history of “heresies” according to Muscovite Orthodox theologians:

Long time ago Devil, the destroyer of anything what is good, had seeded the chaff  
[of heresies], that is, inserted thorn and thistle into the pure wheat.<sup>206</sup>

The ecumenical councils had condemned the ancient “heretics” Arius and Sabellius, yet new “evil vessels” came after them: “damned Bakhmet,” i.e. Prophet Mohammed, “deceived the whole East,” Pope Formosus (IX c.) “seduced the great city of Rome,” and, finally, Martin Luther and his “apprentice” John Calvin “tempted all of the Germans.”<sup>207</sup> “In our last days” only the Orthodox

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<sup>205</sup> *Kirillova kniga*, ff. 6-6 v.

<sup>206</sup> *Ibid.*, f. 7 v.

<sup>207</sup> *Ibid.*, ff. 8-9.



faith “shines as a sun over the whole universe,” concluded the compilers of the *The St. Cyril's Book*.<sup>208</sup>

The way the verses' authors treated the categories of “heresy” and “schism” again did not fit the first rule of St. Basil the Great, which strictly separated “heretics” from “schismatics.” Instead, they portrayed “schism” not as a separate type of ecclesiastical crime, but as a consequence of “heresy.” The ones who cause “schisms” should simply be “cut off of the God's Church,” no less.<sup>209</sup>

It is important to stress that Muscovites learned about Catholic and Protestant teachings not only through the polemical works of their Polish-Lithuanian Orthodox co-believers. The direct contacts with the Catholic world had been constant since Rus' adopted Christianity. Besides, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the Muscovite government maintained diplomatic contacts with many European countries, both Catholic and Protestant, and even considered a possibility of dynastic marriage. For example, in 1621 Russian Patriarch Filaret (1619-1633), who also happened to be the Tsar Mikhail Fedorovich's (1613-1645) father, sent representatives to King Christian IV of Denmark in order to negotiate a marriage between the king's niece Dorothea-Augusta and the Russian tsar. The embassy did not succeed in its mission, partly due to confessional disagreement. Upon the return to Muscovy one of the embassy's members, Orthodox priest and theologian Ivan Nasedka (d. 1666), wrote an anti-Protestant treatise titled *The Synopsis Against Lutherians* (*Izlozhenie na liutory*).<sup>210</sup>

In addition to personal and diplomatic contacts with Protestants, the Muscovite ecclesiastical elite was also familiar with the foundations of reformed Christianity directly through

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<sup>208</sup> *Ibid.*, ff. 12-13.

<sup>209</sup> *Ibid.*, f. 11 v. See also the book's afterword: *Ibid.*, ff. 558 v.-559.

<sup>210</sup> More on this affair and Ivan Nasedka's treatise see in: Oparina, *Ivan Nasedka*, 72-101.

the texts of the leaders of Protestant Reformation. For instance, at least two copies, one printed and one hand-written, of the Slavic translations of John Calvin's *Catechism* belonged to the library of Troitse-Sergiev monastery.<sup>211</sup> Both of the copies contain mid-seventeenth century marginal notes that repeat in laconic form the main motifs of the Muscovite polemics against the Protestantism. The metaphor of the wheat and the chaff, again, gave the commentator the best way to express the diabolical nature of the Protestant teaching and the dangers it poses: "The book of the blasphemous heretic Martin Luther,<sup>212</sup> by which he has deceived many peoples, but for us, Orthodox Christians, there is nothing in this book but [the material] to denounce their blasphemous faith; their heretical teaching is like chaff among wheat, and the one who has not learned the dogma of Orthodoxy completely, could perceive heretical chaff as wheat out of simplicity."<sup>213</sup>

## Conclusion

By the time of the protests against the Patriarch Nikon's changes in the liturgical books the Russian church hierarchy had a language that strictly divided the believers into true and false, just as the parable of the wheat and the chaff separated the good seed, planted by God, from the bad, instilled by Devil. As a result, any type of ecclesiastical deviancy was regarded as a crime against the faith, i.e. heresy. Consequently, the disobedient clergy who revolted in the mid-seventeenth century against Patriarch Nikon and the changes he introduced to Russian liturgical books became "schismatics" in form and "heretics" in essence.

Following this logic, the members of the Moscow Church Council of 1666-1667 proclaimed at one of the sessions that church hierarchs' negligence led to the awakening of

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<sup>211</sup> Belorussian Calvinist and later Unitarian Symon Budny (1530-1593) translated and published Calvin's "Catechism" in 1562 for the propagation of Protestant ideas among Eastern Slavs. Oparina, *Ivan Nasedka*, 199.

<sup>212</sup> In fact, the translated book was by John Calvin, not Martin Luther.

<sup>213</sup> Cited by: Oparina, *Ivan Nasedka*, 201.

“Devil’s chaff”: there appeared “*schismatics* and mutineers that distorted the whole state, many souls were lost, and most of the people were nearly deceived and they turned away from the Orthodox faith to preposterous matters and *heretic* sophistry.” The Council concluded that in order to prevent the “chaff” from rising in the future the heads of the eparchies should “eradicate it completely.”<sup>214</sup> In plain language the Council’s announcement meant that the opponents of liturgical changes had to be condemned and cut off the Church, whether or not they had dogmatic differences with the church authorities. Deacon Feodor’s appeal to the canons was in vain.

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<sup>214</sup> “Kniga sobornykh deianii, o raznykh delakh i o nuzhnykh tserkovnykh vinakh voprosy,” in *Materialy dlia istorii raskola*, t. 2, ch. 2 (1876), 249-250.

### CHAPTER III. “Mutiny” Against the Church and the Tsar

The ecclesiastical documents and polemical works against the opponents of the new liturgical books had unambiguously painted a “schism” in the Russian Church in the categories of power and order. “Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called,” quoted hieromonk Epifanii Slavinetskii (d. 1675) the Apostle Paul’s epistle (1 Cor. 7:20) in his tract *Against the Church Mutineers* (*Na nepokorniki Tserkvi*). He had also stressed that it is God himself who sends apostles, prophets, missionaries, pastors, and teachers. Yet, some “new teachers” came out by themselves just like Apostle Paul warned: “Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things” (see Acts 20:30).<sup>215</sup>

Slavinetskii’s tract perfectly illustrates the church leaders’ concern with the violation of the existing power structure in the Church, as well as in the world in general. It is not surprising, therefore, that throughout the second half of the seventeenth century one of the key-words in the language about the opposition to the new books was “mutiny” (*miatezh*). The church hierarchy certainly viewed the protest this way: as a revolt against the holy order in which they were the only true shepherds of the Christ’s flock. The civil authorities fully supported the church hierarchy.

It is important to note that the conflict over the new liturgical books unfolded in parallel with other social and political developments. On the one hand, Muscovite society experienced the ultimate imposition of serfdom on the peasantry by *The Law Code of 1649* (*Sobornoe ulozhenie*) and unabating social instability starting from the 1640s, manifested in mass rebellions in the capital and around the country. On the other hand, the Russian political system also underwent important changes with the consolidation of the sovereign’s power during the reign of the Tsar Aleksei

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<sup>215</sup> Epifanii Slavinetskii’s polemical treatise *Against the Church Mutineers* is cited by its publication in: T.V. Panich, “Slovo ‘Na nepokorniki tserkvi’ – pamiatnik rannei antistarobriadcheskoi polemiki,” in *Obshchestvennoe soznanie naseleniia Rossii po otechestvennym narrativnym istochnikam XVI-XX vv.* (Novosibirsk: Izdatel’stvo SO RAN, 2006), 175.

Mikhailovich (1645-1676).

Traditionally, the formation of Russian absolute monarchy that reached its zenith in the eighteenth century is connected with Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich's name.<sup>216</sup> It is important to note, however, that the concepts of "absolute monarchy" or "absolutism" refer to some ideal type that has never been in existence and, therefore, too limiting to be useful for research in the early modern monarchies.<sup>217</sup> Specific studies in the history of Muscovite elite culture and popular political imagination vividly demonstrate that the tsar was binded with irrefutable responsibilities before all of his subjects from the highest aristocrats and noble servitors to the humblest serfs and vagrands.<sup>218</sup>

The tsar's assertion of increased political power came with a cost for the church authorities, too. In fact, the ancestors of Muscovite tsars adopted from Byzantium a particular model of the interaction between civil and ecclesiastical spheres known as a "symphony of priesthood and kingdom." It became especially pronounced in Muscovy in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries when this formula was codified in the official documents, such as the Acts of the Church Council of 1551 (the so-called *Stoglav*). In accordance with this formula, tsars played a crucial role in church affairs in general and in the functioning of church councils in particular. As a result, Muscovite political culture vested the tsar with both rights and responsibilities in the spiritual

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<sup>216</sup> See the discussion on the concept of absolutism in its application to seventeenth-century Russia in: Robert O. Crummey, "Seventeenth-century Russia: Theory and Models," *Forschungen zur osteuropäischen Geschichte*, bd. 56 (2000), 113-131.

<sup>217</sup> The most comprehensive criticism of the concepts see in: Nicholas Henshall, *The Myth of Absolutism. Change and Continuity in Early Modern European Monarchy* (London and New York: Longman, 1992).

<sup>218</sup> See, for example: Robert O. Crummey, *Aristocrats and Servitors: The Boyar Elite in Russia, 1613-1689* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983); Nancy Kollman, *Kinship and Politics: The Making of the Muscovite Political System, 1345-1547* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1987); Valerie Kivelson, "The Devil Stole His Mind: The Tsar and 1648 Moscow Uprising," *American Historical Review*, vol. 98, no. 3 (1993), 733-756; Idem., *Autocracy in the Provinces: The Muscovite Gentry and Political Culture in the Seventeenth Century* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996); P.V. Lukin, *Narodnye predstavleniia o gosudarstvennoi vlasti v Rossii XVII veka* (Moscow: Nauka, 2000); P.V. Sedov, *Zakat Moskovskogo tsarstva: tsarskii dvor kontsa XVII veka* (St. Petersburg: Dmitrii Bulanin, 2006); Russell Martin, *A Bride for the Tsar: Bride-shows and Marriage Politics in Early Modern Russia* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2012), and many others.

sphere.<sup>219</sup> The conflict between the Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich and the Patriarch Nikon, however, ended any ambition for the church's parity with, let alone superiority over the secular powers.<sup>220</sup> Aleksei Mikhailovich's son Peter (1682-1725) just finalized the new layout of power by eliminating the position of patriarch altogether in 1721 and replacing it with the Synod.<sup>221</sup>

The "correction" of the liturgical books and the conflict over them was tightly intertwined with the social and political developments in the country.

### Muscovite "Mutinies"

*The Tale of the Holy Council of 1666*, an account of the Moscow Church Council of 1666-1667, opened the 11<sup>th</sup> act with the words condemning the "mutiny" in the Church and its perceived creators: "There was a spiritual council on the healing of the soul ruining harm that is hiding in many limbs of the Russian Orthodox church, in other words on the pacifying of the *mutiny* from the aforementioned *schismatics*: priest Nikita, deacon Feodor, and other *mutineers* like them."<sup>222</sup> In other places of *The Tale* the Council also labeled the archpriest Avvakum as "a slanderer and a *mutineer*" (*klevetnik i miatezhnik*), while Avvakum's fellow monk Efrem Potemkin, as well as the hieromonk Sergii, received the stigma of "*mutineer* and schismatic"; the elder Gerasim Firsov

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<sup>219</sup> Lukin, *Narodnye predstavleniia o gosudarstvennoi vlasti*.

<sup>220</sup> However, the rise and fall of patriarch Nikon demonstrated the fragility and ambiguity of the "symphony." More on this issue see: N.F. Kaptelev, "Tsar' i tserkovnye Moskovskie sobory XVI i XVII stoletii," in *Bogoslovskii vestnik*, t. 3, no. 10-12 (1906), 326-360, 467-502, 631-682; Idem., "Suzhdenie Bol'shogo Moskovskogo Sobora 1667 goda o vlasti tsarskoi i patriarshei," in *Ibid.*, t. 2, no. 6 (1892), 483-516, t. 3, no. 8, 10 (1892), 171-190, 46-74; Michael S. Flier, "Breaking the Code: The Image of the Tsar in the Muscovite Palm Sunday Ritual," in *Medieval Russian Culture*, ed. by Michael S. Flier and Daniel Rowland, vol. II (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 213-242; V.M. Zhivov, B.A. Uspenskii, "Tsar' i Bog: Semioticheskie aspekty sakralizatsii monarkha v Rossii," in *Iazyki kul'tury i problema perevodimosti* (Moscow: Nauka 1987), 47-153; Richard S. Wortman, *Scenarios of Power: Myth and Ceremony in Russian Monarchy*, vol. 1 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995).

<sup>221</sup> On the Tsar Peter's church reform and a conflict over it during the time see: James Cracraft, *The Church Reform of Peter the Great* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1971); Viktor Zhivov, *Iz tserkovnoi istorii vremen Petra Velikogo: issledovaniia i materialy* (Moscow: Novoe literature obozrenie, 2004).

<sup>222</sup> *Skazanie o sviatom sobore*, 120.

from Solovetskii monastery repented before the council his “lies and *mutinies*” (*khulakh i miatezhakh*).<sup>223</sup> The subsequent events proved that the hierarchy failed in their “pacifying” efforts.

Following the Moscow Church Council’s condemnation of the opposition to Nikon’s “corrections,” the Russian Church and state experienced several major clashes connected to the debates over the new books. In 1667, while the Church Council was still meeting in Moscow broke out an uprising in the Solovetskii monastery, one of the richest and most revered monastic communities in Muscovy. Lasting for almost a decade, the uprising was brutally brought to an end in January 1676 by the state’s military might. The victors put to death or imprisoned the defenders of the monastery when it was seized. Soon after that, in the spring of 1682, the Moscow *strel'tsy* (Russian analog of musketeers) started a rebellion in the country’s capital. The opponents of Nikon’s “correction” used this opportunity to publicly confront the church and civil authorities and restore the pre-Nikonian church ways. Though unsuccessful, both of these cases of open and violent opposition sparked a polemical reaction on the side of the authorities.

### *Solovki Rebellion*

The Solovki monastery brethren had been in turmoil over the new liturgical books for over a decade prior to an open rebellion. Finally, in September 1667 the monks categorically refused to accept the Nikon’s “corrections,” as well as to submit to the new hegumen appointed from Moscow. The disobedient brethren supported their position with the argument that they “do not wish to break off with the ordo and tradition of the holy fathers Zosima and Savatii the Miracle-Workers,” i.e. the fifteenth-century founders and patron saints of the monastery.<sup>224</sup>

Traditionally, the uprising is treated in the historiography as a direct reaction to Nikon’s

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<sup>223</sup> *Ibid.*, 82, 96, 106, 117.

<sup>224</sup> See the hegumen Iosif’s reports from the Solovetskii monastery from 1667: *Materialy dlia istorii raskola*, t. 3 (1878), 207-208, 212.

changes, the final stand for the “old faith.”<sup>225</sup> Georg Michels proposed a more complex view of the Solovki uprising. He suggested that it “should be understood in the context of a long-standing history of tension between the monastery and Muscovite Church. The rejection of Nikon’s liturgical books at Solovki was the culmination of a tradition of dissent that had its roots in the specific religious and social conditions of the monastery and its hinterlands... Even though it drew upon the common rhetoric of rejection of the new liturgical books, it emerged from local conditions, not a broad religious dissent rooted in the belief in the superiority of the old Muscovite liturgical tradition.”<sup>226</sup> The fact that for a long time the monastery enjoyed unprecedented autonomy from the central authorities and served as a place of exile for numerous civil and ecclesiastical convicts, many of whom belonged to Muscovite civil and ecclesiastical elite, supports Michels’s argument.

The analysis of the language the state and church authorities employed towards the rebellious monks demonstrates that at the center of the conflict was monastery’s disobedience to the orders from Moscow rather than the new liturgical books themselves. The church hierarchs applied a whole array of polemical labels towards the disobedient Solovki monks and laymen on different stages of the revolt. Initially, in 1666-1667 they used the canonical category of “para-synagogues” (*podtserkovnitsy*) warning the monastery’s inhabitants of excommunication for the insubordination.<sup>227</sup> However, as the monks persisted the hierarchs kept the promise and anathematized “those *schismatics*” and “rebels” (*nepokorniki*) for “disobedience to the Holy

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<sup>225</sup> See, for example: O.V. Chumicheva, *Solovetskoe vosstanie 1667-1676 gg.* 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Moscow: OGI, 2009); E.M. Iukhimenko, N.V. Ponyrko, “‘Istoriia ob otsakh i stradal’tsakh solovetskikh’ Semena Denisova v dukhovnoi zhizni russkogo staroobriadtchestva XVIII-XX vv.,” in Semen Denisov, *Istoriia ob otsakh i stradal’tsakh solovetskikh. Litsevoi spisok iz sobraniia F.F. Mazurina* (Moscow: Iazyki slavianskoi kul’tury, 2002), 7-30; and others.

<sup>226</sup> Georg B. Michels, “The Solovki Uprising,” 3, 15.

<sup>227</sup> “Sobornoe povelienie o priniatii novoispravlennykh knig i chinov, poslannoe v Solovetskii monastyr’ s arkhimandritom Sergiem. 1666 g. Iiul’,” in *Materialy dlia istorii raskola*, t. 3, ch. 3 (1878), 121; “Patriarskii nakaz v Solovetskii monastyr’ o priniatii arkhimandrita Iosifa i podchinenii sobornym postanovleniiam. 1667 goda iulia 23,” in *Ibid.*, 205-206.



Church.”<sup>228</sup> The term “schism” in connection with the disagreement over the newly printed books also appeared in the documents. For example, the joint order of the tsar and patriarch issued after the seizure of the monastery instructed the new hegumen Makarii to watch out “with diligence” for anyone to demonstrate “a *schism* about the newly corrected books and an opposition (*protivnost’*)” to the Church.<sup>229</sup> Unlike the archpriest Avvakum, the deacon Feodor, and others tried at the Moscow Church Council, the rebellious brethren was never charged with “heresy,” even though they themselves regarded the Nikon’s changes in liturgical practice as a manifestation of the “new faith,” i.e. “heresy.”<sup>230</sup>

The words that appear in the documents of the civil authorities most often were “mutiny” (*miatezh*), “rebellion” (*bunt*), and “theft” (*vorovstvo*), as well as other terms associated with disobedience and disruption of order. The tsar’s command to Solovki dated December, 1667 informed the brethren of the confiscation of the monastery’s assets for the “opposition of the cellarer and treasurer, newly elected without permission (*samovol’stvom*), and their accomplices, to the Holy Conciliar and Apostolic Church, and for the disobedience to us, the Grand Sovereign, and to the Holy Ecumenical Patriarchs.”<sup>231</sup> As the suppression of the uprising turned into a military confrontation in Spring 1668, the documents of the civil authorities started to operate almost

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<sup>228</sup> “Gramota vselenskikh patriarkhov arkhimandritu Iosifu, s proklatiem na solovetskikh miatezhnikov. 1668 g.,” in *Ibid.*, 295-296.

<sup>229</sup> “Nakaz solovetskomu arkhimandritu Makariiu o tom, kak emu deistvovat’ v monastyre. 1676 g. apr.,” in *Ibid.*, 371, 372-374; “Gramota patriarkha Ioakima v Solovetskii monastyr’, v otvet na predydushchuiu otpisku arkhimandrita Makariia. 1676 g. dek. 15 dnia,” in *Ibid.*, 447.

<sup>230</sup> “Chelobitnaia (piataia) o vere solovetskikh inokov, 1668,” in *Ibid.*, 245, and others.

<sup>231</sup> *Akty sobrannye v bibliotekakh i arkhivakh Rossiiskoi imperii Arkheograficheskoiu ekspeditsiei Imperatorskoi Akademii nauk* (hereafter – *AAE*), 4 vols. (St. Petersburg: v Tipografii II Otdeleniia Sobstvennoi E.I.V. Kantseliarii, 1836), t. 4 (1645-1700), no. 160 (The tsar’s letter to Solovki monastery’s brethren, December 27, 1667), 212.

exclusively with the concepts of “mutiny” and “theft.”<sup>232</sup> The latter term in this context referred to what was perceived as a usurpation of power, that is an illicit seizure of the right to govern.<sup>233</sup>

In May, 1673 Solovki monks received an admonition letter from the Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich. The letter stated that by refusing the new books the brethren committed “*mutiny* and *disobedience*” (*miatezh i nepokorenie*) to the Holy Church and “*opposition*” (*prekoslovstvo*) to the tsar himself.<sup>234</sup> In other words, in the eyes of the state authorities the Solovki brethren’s crime was not in the adherence to the old books *per se*, but rather in the disobedience to the orders from Moscow and in the acting on their own free will. The rebellion lasted for several more years until the tsar’s troops brutally put it down in winter 1676.

### *Moscow Rebellion of 1682*

Another major upheaval connected to the old and new books took place less than a decade after the repression of Solovki rebellion. The young Tsar Feodor Alekseevich who inherited the throne from his father Aleksei Mikhailovich in 1676, died in April 1682. In a situation of a contested crown succession Moscow *strel'tsy* (Russian analogue of musketeers) broke out in a

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<sup>232</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 168 (The tsar’s letter to archimandrite Iosif of Solovetskii monastery, May 3, 1669), 220-221; *Ibid.*, no. 171 (The tsar’s letter to archimandrite Iosif of Solovetskii monastery, October 25, 1669), 223; *Ibid.*, no. 191 (The tsar’s letter to Solovki monastery’s brethren, May 12, 1673), 245; “Gramota tsaria Alekseia Mikhailovicha Klementiiu Ievlevu. 1673 g. maia 13,” in *Materialy dlia istorii raskola*, t. 3, ch. 3 (1878), 319-321; *Dopolneniia k Aktam istoricheskim, sobrannyya i izdannyya Arkheograficheskoiu kommissieiu* (hereafter - *DAI*), 12 vols. (St. Petersburg: v Tipografii II Otdeleniia Sobstvennoi E.I.V. Kantseliarii, 1846-1872), t. 5: 339-374 (Documents on the siege of the Solovetskii monastery, April 5, 1668 – January 24, 1676).

<sup>233</sup> See, for example, the 1674 questionnaire designed for the apprehended Solovki “mutineers” that fully reflected on the categorization of monastery’s crimes. The authorities particularly wished to get answers to the following questions: “Whether they obey to the Grand Sovereign? And whether they submit to the Holy Eastern Conciliar and Apostolic Church and to the Holy Council, and whether they listen to the newly corrected printed books and make the sign of the cross on themselves using the first three fingers? And who did cause the *rebellion* (*bunt*) and *mutiny* (*miatezh*) in the Solovetskii monastery? And who are the ones who are the main *thieves* and instigators (*zavodchiki*) of *rebellion* (*bunt*) and *thievery* (*vorovstvo*) in the monastery, and what is going on in the Solovetskii monastery?” *Akty istoricheskie, sobrannyye i izdannyye Arkheograficheskoiu kommissieiu* (hereafter - *AI*), 5 vols. (St. Petersburg: v Tipografii II Otdeleniia Sobstvennoi E.I.V. Kantseliarii, 1841-1842), t. 4 (1645-1676), no. 248 (Voevoda Ivan Meshcherinov’s report to the tsar, October 23, 1674), 531.

<sup>234</sup> “Gramota tsaria Alekseia Mikhailovicha, uveshchatel’naia, k solovetskim miatezhnikam. 1673 g. maia 12,” in *Materialy dlia istorii raskola*, t. 3, ch. 3 (1878), 317.

violent rebellion, which lasted until the fall of 1682. As a result of the rebellion both of the lawful heirs to the Russian throne, 16-year old Ivan and 10-year old Peter (the future Peter the Great) were pronounced the ruling sovereigns, while their older sister, Sofia, took the reins of government in the status of regent.<sup>235</sup>

The opponents of the new liturgical books viewed the disorder in the central government as an opportunity to restore the pre-Nikonian ways in the Russian Church. According to one of the witnesses and participants in the events, townsman Savva Romanov, many of the rebellious *strel'tsy* in fact adhered to the “old Orthodox Christian faith.” Therefore, given a chance, they petitioned the church and state authorities demanding to answer “why they, the authorities, came to hate the old books ..., and fell in love with the new Latin-Roman faith.”<sup>236</sup> The author of the famous critique of Nikon’s “corrections,” the defrocked priest Nikita Dobrynin, as well as monk Sergii, the aforementioned Savva Romanov, and some others led the attempt with the support from the side of the *strel'tsy* commander Prince Ivan Khovanskii. The public disputation between the dissidents and the church hierarchs that took place in the Kremlin’s Faceted Chamber on July 5, 1682 became a culmination point of the conflict over the old and new books. Even though Nikita Dobrynin and his fellows claimed the victory over their rivals,<sup>237</sup> soon after the disputation the

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<sup>235</sup> More on the 1682 rebellion in Moscow see in: Lindsey Hughes, *Sophia, Regent of Russia. 1657-1704* (New Heaven and London: Yale University Press, 1990), 52-88; A.S. Lavrov, *Regentstvo tsarevny Sof'i Alekseevny: Sluzhiloe obshchestvo i bor'ba za vlast' v verkhakh Russkogo gosudarstva v 1682-1689 gg.* (Moscow: Arkheograficheskii tsentr, 1999), 15-78.

<sup>236</sup> “‘Istoriia o vere i chelobitnaia o strel'tsakh’ Savvy Romanova,” in *Letopisi russkoi literatury i drevnosti*, ed. by N.S. Tikhonravov, t. 5 (Moscow: v Tipografii Gracheva i Komp., 1863), 111. More on Savva Romanov and his work see: N.Iu. Bubnov, “‘Istoriia o vere i chelobitnaia o strel'tsakh’ Savvy Romanova i ee literaturnye istochniki,” in *Kniga v Rossii XVI-serediny XIX v.: Materialy i issledovaniia* (Leningrad: Biblioteka Akademii nauk SSSR, 1990), 53-61; D.M. Bulanin, K.V. Orlov, “Savva Romanov,” in *SKKDR*, vyp. 3, ch. 2 (St. Petersburg: Dmitrii Bulanin, 1998), 322-324.

<sup>237</sup> Ioakim, *Slovo blagodarstvennoe ob izbalenii tserkvi ot otstupnikov* (Moscow: Pechatnyi dvor, 1683), 52.

authorities arrested many of them and beheaded Dobrynin on Red Square. The battle for the return of the old rites in the Russian Church was lost once and for all.<sup>238</sup>

The church authorities replied to the petition and disputation in several polemical treatises. In them the main motifs in the description of the dissenters were “disobedience” (*nepokorstvo*) and “lawlessness” (*beschinstvo*), terms directly connected to the concept of “mutiny” (*miatezh*). Just several days before the public debate in Kremlin, the Moscow printing house published Patriarch Ioakim’s (1674-1690) *Admonition (Pouchenie)* against the defenders of the old books.<sup>239</sup> Addressing all of the Orthodox Christians in Russia Ioakim warned against the “evil people and mutineers of the Holy Church” (*ot zlykh chelovekov i miatezhnikov sviatyiya tserkvi*), namely Nikita Dobrynin and his fellows. Their “evil discourses” (*zlye besedy*), he claimed, are nothing but “temptation” (*soblazn*), “lie” (*lozh*), and “old wives’ fables” (*bab’i basni*),<sup>240</sup> which lead to eternal damnation instead of salvation.<sup>241</sup> The patriarch reminded his flock that the Moscow Church Council attended by the ecumenical patriarchs had denounced those “evil *schismatics* and church mutineers” (*zle raskolnitsy i miatezhnitsy tserkovnyia*) already. More than that, Nikita Dobrynin had repented before the Council “in his *schism*” (*v tom svoem raskole*) and even received

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<sup>238</sup> For a detailed account of the disputation and preparation, see in: O.G. Usenko, “O chelobitnykh v zashchitu ‘staroi very’” (leto 1682 g.), in *Trudy Otdela drevnerusskoi literatury* (hereafter – *TODRL*), t. 51 (1999), 385-395.

<sup>239</sup> This document is known in historiography under the title The Treatise on Nikita Pustosviat (*Slovo na Nikitu Pustosviata*) (Ioakim, [*Slovo na Nikitu Pustosviata*] (Moscow: Pechatnyi dvor, 1682)). However, it contains neither title page nor any sort of heading, therefore I use the title *Pouchenie (The Admonition)* instead, which can be found in the Moscow Printing house’s archival record regarding the document’s publishing (“600 *pouchenii* v poldest’ v 2 tetrati, 600 zhe *pouchenii* v 4 tetrati v poldest’”) (see: Iu.S. Beliankin, “Dokumenty arkhivov moskovskikh prikazov ob izdanii i rasprostranении antistaroobriadcheskikh knig Moskovskogo Pechatnogo dvora vo vtoroi polovine XVII v.,” *Otechestvennye arkhivy*, no. 4 (2011), 53).

<sup>240</sup> The expression “old wives’ fables” (*bab’i basni*) originates from the 1<sup>st</sup> epistle of Apostle Paul to Timothy: “If thou put brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine, whereunto thou hast attained. But refuse profane and *old wives’ fables*, and exercise thyself rather unto godliness” (1 Timothy 4:6-7). It first appeared in Russian translation of the scripture in the “corrected” 1655 edition of The Book of the Apostles. Previous translations of this passage used the expression “rotten fables” (*izgnivshie basni*) instead. *Apostol* (Moscow: Pechatnyi dvor, 1655), f. 250 v.).

<sup>241</sup> Ioakim, [*Slovo na Nikitu Pustosviata*], f. 2 v.

forgiveness.<sup>242</sup> Yet, Nikita and his fellows demonstrate disobedience to the authorities again, as they “like real wolves, ranging in secret, teach ignoramuses and simple folks their own perdition, and revolt against the whole state and create discord in the Holy Church.”<sup>243</sup>

The godless nature of the disobedience to hierarchy, ecclesiastical as well as civil, was the most important idea the Ioakim’s *Admonition* translated to its audience. The patriarch opened the treatise with a statement of the God-given power he, as a hierarch, held over the church flock. It was Jesus Christ himself who “commanded us to pasture his faithful flock with the following words: If you love me, feed my sheep” (John 21:16-17).<sup>244</sup> Further, Ioakim employed the biblical references to denounce and condemn the Devil’s nature and soul-ruining consequences of Nikita Dobrynin’s protest:

These mad people, *deceived by the Devil*, truly *walk after their own lusts*, *separating themselves from the unity of faith*, who disobey the Holy Church, the pious tsars, as well as our shepherding and the entire Council, and stubbornly ruin themselves eternally, as they oppose the Holy Eastern Church: all of the scriptures and faith in our Lord God is from it.<sup>245</sup>

In this passage the *Admonition* referred to the apocalyptic homily of Apostle Jude warning against “mockers” coming before the end of the world. These “mockers” would “*walk after their own ungodly lusts*. These be they who *separate themselves*, sensual, having not the Spirit” (Jude 1:18-19; see also 2 Peter 3:3). Thus, Ioakim stressed that Dobrynin and his fellows were wicked people, whose revolt directly related to their wickedness.

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<sup>242</sup> *Ibid.*, ff. 8-8 v.

<sup>243</sup> *Ibid.*, ff. 11 v.-12.

<sup>244</sup> *Ibid.*, f. 1 v.

<sup>245</sup> *Ibid.*, f. 11.

The patriarch also appealed to the words of Apostle Paul who famously equated the disobedience to worldly authorities with resistance to God's order. The passage from the Paul's homily to Romans, which Ioakim cited verbatim, stated:

Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resists the power, resists the ordinance of God: and *they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation.* (Romans 13:1-2)<sup>246</sup>

Therefore, the dissenters like Nikita Dobrynin, Avvakum, and deacon Feodor, deserved damnation not only for what they said and wrote about the new books, but also for their refusal to obey to the church hierarchy.

There was one more layer of power Nikita and others like him allegedly encroached upon – the right to judge about the differences in the new and old books. According to the *Admonition*, they truly were “ignoramuses” (*nevezhdy, nevegiasy*) as none of them had advanced ecclesiastical education. Comparing the study of the Holy Scripture to the acquiring of the craft of icon-painting, Ioakim stressed that “no one can know perfectly [the Holy Scripture] without studying sophistic arts and sciences.”<sup>247</sup> Therefore, Dobrynin's criticism of the new books was not only uninformed but also unlawful.

The patriarch stressed the fact that the “mutineers” had no right to intrude on priestly rank since every one of them, including their defrocked leader, were laymen. The canon law is straightforward here, stated the *Admonition*: “The rules of the holy fathers say as follows: Layman should not reproach a priest, or prohibit, or malign, or denounce [him] in person, even if it is fair in some way.” (“It is not really fair at all from their side,” remarked the patriarch in parentheses).

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<sup>246</sup> This passage is cited in: *Ibid.*, f. 6.

<sup>247</sup> *Ibid.*, ff. 6 v.-7. Both Nikita Dobrynin and Savva Romanov authored extensive and highly intelligible treatises regarding the changes in liturgical books. However, there is no information whether they received any formal education beyond basic clerical literacy.

Whoever breaks this rule is subject to anathema, i.e. expelled from the Church and summoned “to Judas’ place.”<sup>248</sup>

In a word, the Patriarch insisted that Nikita Dobrynin and other “mutineers” like him should not dispute the church’s ways as they have no authority to do so: “they were not entrusted with governing, yet [they] try to govern.”<sup>249</sup> These accusations apparently repeated what the patriarch had said to the opponents of the new books in person a week before the disputation in the tsars’ presence. As Savva Romanov wrote down later, the patriarch exclaimed that day: “it does not become you to judge even a simple layman, let alone a hierarch... We bear the image of Christ in ourselves; I myself am a shepherd, not a thief; I have entered [] through the door, not through a fence.”<sup>250</sup> Thus, Ioakim interpreted Christ’s parable of the good shepherd in favor of ordained clergy: in accordance with the presented proclamation, whoever is not appointed to lead the flock by lawful ecclesiastical authorities is a “thief,” not a “shepherd.”

In September 1682, two months after the disputation and the execution of Nikita Dobrynin, the Moscow printing house issued one more, this time extensive treatise against the defeated “*mutineers* and *schismatics*” in the name of Patriarch Ioakim. The new polemical account, titled *The Spiritual Exhortation (Uvet dukhovnyi)*, examined dissidents’ arguments in detail.<sup>251</sup> The introductory part of the book denounced Nikita Dobrynin and his supporters once again, in addition to providing a historic account of the events surrounding the disputation. Just like in the *Admonition*, *The Spiritual Exhortation* charged the “schismatics” first and foremost with

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<sup>248</sup> *Ibid.*, f. 10 v. Ioakim in this case refers to the apocryphal rule 121 of the 4<sup>th</sup> Ecumenical Council in Chalcedon (451 AD) as published in Russian translation of *Nomocanon (Potrebnik* (Moscow: Pechatnyi dvor, 1658)). See also in: Pavlov, *Nomocanon pri Bol’shom Potrebnike*, 268-269.

<sup>249</sup> Ioakim, *[Slovo na Nikitu Pustosviata]*, f. 10 v.

<sup>250</sup> “‘Istoriia o vere i chelobitnaia o strel’tsakh’ Savvy Romanova,” 122.

<sup>251</sup> *Uvet dukhovnyi* (Moscow: Pechatnyi dvor, 1682). It is universally accepted that the actual author of the work was in fact archbishop Afanasii of Kholmogory (1682-1702), not Patriarch Ioakim himself. S.A. Belokurov, “Kto avtor ‘Uveta dukhovnogo’?” in *Khristianskoe chtenie*, no. 2 (1886), 163-177.

disobedience to the authorities, ecclesiastical as well as civil.

*The Spiritual Exhortation* essentially repeated *The Rod of Rulership* (*Zhezl pravleniia*) in its interpretation of the opposition to Nikon's "correction" of the liturgical books. The Devil assaulting the Holy Church through his "vessels" was at the core of the dissent:

And [Devil] raised great falsehoods and *schisms* against her [the Church] through his evil vessels and conspirators, new liars (*bliadoslovtsy*) and *heretics* Nikita, and Lazar', and their accomplices, who became like the father of their lies, the Devil, and emitted the evil falsehoods (*khulenii*) from their mouths, just like that serpent portrayed in the Revelation of St. John the Divine who poured out water like river, so that he can drown the woman in that river.<sup>252</sup>

*The Spiritual Exhortation* maintained that the "mutiny" had been pacified thanks to the Church Council "the pious Tsar" Aleksei Mikhailovich assembled in Moscow in 1666; peace prevailed back then because "those evil and mad (*bezumnye*) adversaries and *schismatics* fell off [the Church], and could not dare to spread their lies at all" anymore.<sup>253</sup> Yet, years later the "evil *schismatics* raved" again led by "thrice cursed unfrocked former priest Nikita."<sup>254</sup>

*The Spiritual Exhortation* raised a revealing argument against the dissidents: "no one among the principal people of the whole state, as well as chief pastors (*izbrannye pastyri*) and teachers of the Holy Orthodox faith" petitioned to the tsars against the new books; instead, they even tried to prevent the dissidents' attempts to question the changes. Therefore, how could dissidents' petition, falsely marked as from "the entire state" (*b'et chelom vse gosudarstvo*), be legitimate?<sup>255</sup> Nikita Dobrynin and other people like him defied the authorities and became

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<sup>252</sup> *Uvet dukhovnyi*, ff. 44 v.-45.

<sup>253</sup> *Ibid.*, f. 51.

<sup>254</sup> *Ibid.*, ff. 53 v.-54, 57-57 v.

<sup>255</sup> *Ibid.*, ff. 86 v.-87. The deacon Feodor criticized Patriarch Ioakim just for that – following the orders of the state authorities even in the questions of faith: "(He said) I, sovereign, know neither old nor new faith, but am ready to do anything the superiors command and [ready] to abide to them wholly." Cited by: V.K. Ziborov, "Ioakim," in *SKKDR*, vyp. 3, ch 2 (1993), 53.



*samozakonnyi*, i.e. persons following their own law instead of the law of the Lord. All the “greatest disasters, numerous discords, and disorders” originate from such people, argued the author.<sup>256</sup> “Because nowhere in the world does anything good come out for people from disobedience to their sovereigns, tsars, and pastors, [even from the disobedience] to the prime man in the house or small dwelling,” he insisted further, “for [whoever] disobeys them, defies God.”<sup>257</sup>

The vocabulary of the official civil documents resembled the language of the ecclesiastical polemic. The tsars’ decrees issued during the *strel'tsy* rebellion of 1682 labeled Nikita Dobrynin as “damned schismatic” (*prokliatyi raskol'nik*), “apostate” (*bogootstupnik*), “thief and *mutineer* of the Holy Church and of the whole state,” while his teachings and actions - as “thievery and schism” (*vorovstvo i raskol*).<sup>258</sup> Just like category of “schismatic” in the *Admonition* and *The Spiritual Exhortation*, these labels demonstrate both the spiritual corruption of the accused and their disobedience to the existing order. In fact, the seventeenth-century polemics reveal that disobedience to the church hierarchy was perceived as disobedience to the Church itself, therefore was a spiritual crime worthy of eternal damnation. It suggests that the idea of the Church at the time was first of all a flock of governed sheep, rather than a group of believers gathered in the name of Jesus Christ. Authoritative hierarchy was an indispensable part of that Church and the so-called “schismatics” challenged the shepherds’ credibility.

### **“Mutiny” and Social Disciplining**

Simeon Polotskii’s notable work *The Rod of Rulership* (*Zhezl pravleniia*) suggested that the unruly sheep required not only severe punishment but also proper governance from the side of

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<sup>256</sup> *Uvet dukhovnyi*, ff. 2 v.-4.

<sup>257</sup> *Ibid.*, f. 9.

<sup>258</sup> “Tsarskaia okruzhnaia gramota k ratnym liudiam s ukazaniem o nemedelennom ikh priezde dlia podavleniia vosstaniia v Moskve” (September, 1682), in *Vosstanie v Moskve 1682 goda: Sbornik dokumentov* (Moscow: Nauka, 1976), 115; “Smertnyi prigovor kn. I.A. i A.I. Khovanskim” (September 17, 1682), in *Ibid.*, 131-132.

the shepherds. Therefore, to combat the “discords, temptations, and *mutinies*, which took place in the Church” the ecclesiastical authorities took not only offensive steps but also a whole array of measures designed to impose discipline on clerics and laymen alike. Russian civil and ecclesiastical rulers expressed serious concerns about the lack of piety and order among the country’s Orthodox believers long before the Moscow Church Council of 1666-1667, yet, without question, the Council’s decisions were, using Georg Michels’s words, “a turning point in relations between church and society.”<sup>259</sup> Only in the 1660’s the ecclesiastical authorities began a systematic initiative in regard to local church life, installing central control over parishes and monastic communities. The forceful dissemination of the new liturgical books played an instrumental role in this process.<sup>260</sup>

Clerical education was one of the primary goals of the Council’s measures and regulations. It directly connected the “*mutinies* and *schisms* taking place in God’s Church” to the ignorance of rural clergymen, some of whom were “not able to shepherd livestock, let alone people.” The Council saw the way out of this regrettable situation in the proper training for the new generations of parish clerics. Surprisingly, the hierarchs entrusted this duty to the presumably ignorant local clergymen themselves: “every priest should with all the diligence instruct his children in literacy, the fear of God, and all the ecclesiastical discipline, so that they will be worthy of priesthood,” declared the Council.<sup>261</sup> What practical effect, if any, this command had on the level of parish clergymen’s training is a matter of a separate investigation.<sup>262</sup>

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<sup>259</sup> Michels, *At War With the Church*, 220. The Moscow Church Council of 1551, known under the name of *Stoglav*, took numerous steps to restrict popular religiosity and to impose control over many spheres of church life, including discipline in monasteries and icon-painting. See more in: Emchenko, *Stoglav*.

<sup>260</sup> Michels, *At War With the Church*, 220-222.

<sup>261</sup> *Sluzhebnik* (Moscow: Pechatnyi dvor, 1668), f. 14 (appendix).

<sup>262</sup> Gregory Freeze famously argued that Russian Orthodox Church has not actually succeeded in the “Christianization” on the level of rural parishes even by the mid-nineteenth century if ever (Gregory L. Freeze, “The Rechristianization of Russia: The Church and Popular Religion, 1750-1850,” in *Studia Finlandensia*, no. 6 (1990), 101-136).

The Council also prescribed the behavior of clerics and parishioners alike, as well as directed the performance of the church services and ceremonies, including the placement and treatment of holy objects. The Council members paid special attention to the sacrament of confession: from now on the parishioners ought to partake in it annually under the threat of denying proper Christian burial.<sup>263</sup> Soon after the closing of the Moscow Church Council these regulations were distributed countrywide alongside the fierce denunciation of the oppositionists to the “corrections” in the liturgical books: the Moscow printing house included the shortened version of the Council’s acts under the title *The Conciliar Scroll* (*Sobornyi svitok*) in the 1668 edition of the service book.<sup>264</sup>

Subsequently, the Russian Church hierarchy continued with its disciplining efforts. So, the Council of the Russian Church hierarchs that met in Moscow in November, 1681, addressed the improvement of the Church’s administration as well as the imposition of proper pastoral instruction. In particular, it raised the number of episcopal seats (bishoprics), ordered the inculcation of discipline and decency in monastic life, particularly in food and alcohol consumption, prepared measures to restrain vagrancy, especially among clerics, established better management of holy relics, and restricted non-institutionalized expression of piety in the form of unauthorized chapels and church services.<sup>265</sup> Just like the Council of 1654 that introduced the new liturgical books, the Council of 1681 called its disciplining measures “corrections” that aimed to resolve some of the urgent questions of the church life.

One of the major concerns expressed in the Council’s acts was the growth of the

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<sup>263</sup> *Skazanie o sviatom sobore*, 124-144.

<sup>264</sup> *Sluzhebnik*, ff. 1-16 v. (of appendix). Full publication of the Council’s acts made by the original copy see also: “Kniga sobornykh deianii, o raznykh delakh i o nuzhnykh tserkovnykh vinakh voprosy,” in *Materialy dlia istorii raskola*, t. 2, ch. 2 (1876), 187-412.

<sup>265</sup> *AI*, t. 5 (1676-1700), no. 75 (The Council’s rulings following the tsar’s propositions, November 1681), 108-118.

“opposition to the Holy Church” that originated from disobedience.<sup>266</sup> In particular, they noted that many “unruly” monks, male as well as female, leave monasteries for solitary living in the woods. They “gradually gather similarly disobedient people around themselves, establish chapels, and hold church services [in them], and then petition hierarchs and the Patriarch about the establishment of churches in those places, which they call hermitages.” The danger of such hermitages the tsar and the Council saw in the fact that the hermits “performed public prayers not by the newly corrected books, that is why many people settle around such hermitages and consider [the hermits] to be martyrs.” The Council’s reply was to prohibit the establishment of new hermitages; the ones that already existed should be absorbed by the legitimate monasteries, while the settlements around them turned into parishes.<sup>267</sup> At the same time, the Council called for the restriction of the old printed books’ circulation “so that there would be no discord in the holy churches and doubt among the people.” Such books had to be confiscated or exchanged for the newly printed ones without charge.<sup>268</sup>

It is noteworthy how the documents of the 1681 Church Council talked about the “opposition to the Holy Church”: instead of painting it as a deliberate dissent on the part of some “deceivers,” as the aforementioned polemicists would do, the Council’s documents portrayed the opposition as a consequence of the lack of proper control over local monastic communities and book distribution. It is not surprising therefore, that the Council did not impose any sort of punishment on the distributors or users of the old books, but rather insisted on the replacement of such books with the “correct” ones.

At the very end of the seventeenth century the Patriarch Adrian (1690-1700) introduced a

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<sup>266</sup> *Ibid.*, 117.

<sup>267</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>268</sup> *Ibid.*, 118.

measure that manifested a radical step further in the imposition of institutional control over believers' spiritual life: the confessional registries. The special instruction for the parish priests, issued in December, 1697, obliged priests to instruct their parishioners in regular church attendance as well as in the partaking of the sacraments regularly. The instructions that that whoever failed to confess annually the parish priests should list in the special registries and report them to the Patriarch's office in Moscow.<sup>269</sup> The systematic enforcement of the registries on the state level occurred only several decades later, though.

The language of ecclesiastical disciplining the church hierarchs employed throughout the second half of the seventeenth century conveyed not only the Church's outlook, but also its conduct in the governing of the flock. The hierarchs attempted to go beyond simple submission to their authority by imposing order on the spiritual life and practices of Muscovite Orthodox believers. It is problematic, however, to say that this development was a direct reaction to the church dissent associated with the rejection of the new liturgical books, but rather was a result of a longer development in Muscovite ecclesiastical governance. Ironically, many of the dissidents themselves, such as archpriest Avvakum and his fellows, championed it prior to getting into conflict with the authorities.

### **The Tsar and the Church**

One of the essential parts of both of the major works associated with the Moscow Church Council of 1666-1667, *The Rod of Rulership (Zhezl pravleniia)* and *The Tale of the Holy Council*

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<sup>269</sup> Articles 8-9 of the *Instruction for clerical elders (Instruktsiia starostam popovskim)* (published in: *Drevniaia rossiiskaia vivliofika* (hereafter - *DRV*), 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 20 vols. (Moscow: v Tipografii Kompanii Tipograficheskoi, 1788-1791), t. 15, no. XXV (July 25, 1699), 376; *Polnoe sobranie zakonov Rossiiskoi imperii* (hereafter - *PSZ*), 45 vols. (St. Petersburg, 1830), t. 3 (1689-1699), no. 1612 (December 26, 1697), 415). For more on the confessional registries see in: B.N. Mironov, "Ispovednye vedomosti – istochnik o chislennosti i sotsial'noi strukture pravoslavnogo naseleniia Rossii XVIII-pervoi poloviny XIX veka," in *Vspomogatel'nye istoricheskie distsipliny*, vyp. 20 (Leningrad: Nauka, 1989), 102-117.

of 1666 (*Skazanie o sviatom sobore*) was an emphasis on the Russian tsar's role in church affairs. *The Tale* communicated a message about the responsibility of the Russian tsars to guard the "pure wheat" of Christianity against the "chaff" of dissent, while *The Rod of Rulership* portrayed a symbolical delegation of pastoral authority from the church hierarchs to the Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich. Both of these accounts, created on the tsar's orders, apparently served the goal of affirming the sovereign's authority in civil and ecclesiastical spheres alike. The "schismatic" issue was a perfect instance to demonstrate it.

Both the church authorities and the ones called "schismatics and mutineers" appealed to the tsar as an arbiter in the conflict. The deacon Feodor Ivanov, for instance, in his 1666 petition to the Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich indicated that the duty of keeping the "Church's wheat field" clean from the chaff of "temptation" in the form of the changes in the liturgical books rested on him.<sup>270</sup> The Church Council of 1666-1667 in its turn also spoke about the responsibilities of civil powers led by the tsar. The hierarchs affirmed that it is lay powers' duty to assist the Church in putting down dissent. Chapter 7 contains a clear pronouncement attributed to the Eastern Orthodox Patriarchs Paisios of Alexandria and Macarios of Antioch: the "heretics and schismatics" should be punished in accordance with both civil and ecclesiastical laws just like the Holy Ecumenical Councils assembled by Byzantine "pious tsars" (*blagochestiveishie tsari*) suggests.<sup>271</sup>

This passage had a very general meaning as it advocated state action against anyone who

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<sup>270</sup> Feodor, deacon, "Chelobitnaia tsariu Alekseiu Mikhailovichu, podannaia v 1666-m godu," in *Materialy dlia istorii raskola*, t. 6, ch. 3 (1881), 44. Pavel Lukin attributes to deacon Feodor and other oppositionist polemicists, all of whom he signifies as "schismatic teachers" (*raskolouchiteli*) or Old Believers (*staroobriadtsy*), a special conception, different from their counterparts, of the tsar's authority. The root of that conception Lukin sees in their shared understanding of Russia as the one and only Orthodox state; the Russian tsar, as the head of such state, appeared to be a sacred figure, directly connected to God (Lukin, *Narodnye predstavleniia*, 188-223, esp. 199). It is not apparent, however, if the "old ritualists'" understanding of the tsar's authority was any different from the popular one (see, for example, *Ibid.*, 54-55). Besides, the question arises whether their special view was a direct reaction to Nikon's changes in the liturgical books or a product of already existing traditions. I think it is the latter.

<sup>271</sup> "Kniga sobornykh deianii," in *Materialy dlia istorii raskola*, t. 2, ch. 2 (1876), 373-375. See also in: *PSZ*, t. 1 (1649-1675), no. 412 (June 17, 1667), 705-706.

diverged from the Russian Orthodox Church in faith (i.e. heretic) or disobeyed its orders (i.e. schismatic). However, the situation with the vocal opponents of the new liturgical books seemed to be analogous to the struggles of the ancient Church and the Russian tsars unequivocally supported the Council's call.

### **Executing “Schismatics”**

It is commonly assumed in studies of Russian history that the beginning of the state's persecution of the adherents of the old books falls in 1685. In that year the government of the Tsarina Sofia issued the famous 12 articles on “schismatics,” which promised them severe punishment, namely a death sentence through burning at the stake.<sup>272</sup> However, in fact the people commonly referred to in the historiography as “schismatics” had been put to death already in 1660s. For example, in January 1666, even before the Church Council of 1666-1667 has started, the Muscovite authorities tried the elder Vavilo from Riazan' who disapproved the new books. Brought under torture, he rejected the sacraments of confession and Eucharist as well as icon veneration due to the fact that the churches were “desecrated” (*oskverneny*). The same month, the elder was sentenced to death for his “blasphemous and obscene discourses” (*bogokhulnye i nepristoinye rechi*).<sup>273</sup>

The key word in Vavilo's sentence, “blasphemy,” suggests that the decision to execute him was based on the first article of the legal code known as the *Sobornoe Ulozhenie* of 1649. It ordered burning at the stake for whomever “utter[ed] blasphemy” (*vozlozhit khulu*) against Jesus Christ,

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<sup>272</sup> See, for example: Zenkovsky, *Russkoe staroobriadchestvo*, 436; Robert O. Crummey, *The Old Believers and the World of Antichrist*, 41-42; James Cracraft, *The Church Reform of Peter the Great*, 74-75; Hughes, *Sophia, Regent of Russia*, 123; and others. The phrase “burn at the stake” is not used literally here or hereafter due to the fact that Russian authorities used different execution technique, burning *v srube*, i.e. a closed wooden construction resembling a house.

<sup>273</sup> “1666 g. ianvaria 11. Prigovor startsu Vavile o ego kazni (sozhzhenii v srube) v Viaznikakh,” in *Narodnoe antitserkovnoe dvizhenie v Rossii*, 82.

the Virgin Mary, the holy saints, or the holy cross.<sup>274</sup> This norm was general enough to bring to trial anyone criticizing the changes in the liturgical books. Very soon, however, the tsar's ukase appeared, specifically designed for the so-called "schismatics." Its main concern apparently was the "schismatics'" lack of obedience rather than their affront to the holy. The ukase proclaimed that failure to submit to the Church, i.e. the ecclesiastical authorities, merited the ultimate penalty:

those *schismatics*, who do not obey to the Eastern Apostolic Church, should be persuaded repeatedly to withdraw from a church *schism*/schismaticality (*raskolstvo*), repent, and turn to the truth. If there are *schismatics* who will not submit [to the authorities] and will not come into their senses, let those *schismatics* be burned [at the stake].<sup>275</sup>

The earliest reference to this decree can be found in a document dated to April, 1675, and dealing with a "schism" in the region of Viatka.<sup>276</sup>

Throughout 1675 Viatka authorities arrested several groups of "church schismatics" (*tserkovnye roskolshchiki*). The head of Viatka's civil and military administration, *voevoda* Vasilei Naryshkin, reported on their cases to Moscow and received orders to proceed with the investigation and punishments. These documents replicated the formulas used in the ukase, thus treating the category of "schismatic" in the context of church discipline.

Initially, as the *voevoda* reported, the authorities seized a certain Simanko Strel'nikov and Pronka Batashov with "companions" (*s tovaryshchi*). Civil as well as ecclesiastical officials urged them "to withdraw from a church schismaticality (*raskolstvo*), repent, and turn to the truth." But Simanko Strel'nikov and four other "church schismatics" "did not submit" (*ne pokorilis'*) to the

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<sup>274</sup> *Ulozhenie* (Moscow: Pechatnyi dvor, 1649), f. 66. See also in: *PSZ*, t. 1 (1649-1675), no. 1 (January 29, 1649), 3.

<sup>275</sup> A.T. Shashkov, "Neizvestnyi dokument 1675 g. o presledovaniakh staroobriadtsev na Viatke," in *Narodnaia kul'tura Urala v epokhu feodalizma* (Sverdlovsk: AN SSSR, 1990), 82.

<sup>276</sup> I could not locate the exact date of the decree, however, the earliest reference to it I found in the document dated to April, 1675: Shashkov, "Neizvestnyi dokument 1675 g.," 80-82. See also other documents mentioning the tsar's decree: *AI*, t. 5 (1676-1700), no. 75 (Council's rulings following the tsar's propositions, November 1681), 111; *AAE*, t. 4 (1645-1700), no. 284 (Articles about "schismatics," April 7, 1685), 420.



authorities and consequently they were burned at the stake “in accordance with the great sovereign’s ukase.” Meanwhile, Pronka Batashev and two of his “companions” “turned to the truth and [started to] attend the Holy Church.”<sup>277</sup> It is unknown if the latter received any penalty.

Later the same year the Viatka civil authorities seized another 9 monks and 19 nuns who appeared to be “church schismatics.” It was later discovered that all of the nuns wore monastic clothes without official ecclesiastical ordination: they “put on black dresses by themselves,” says the document. The authorities also found out by the means of torture that the monks committed fornication (*bludnoe vorovstvo*) with the self-proclaimed nuns, while a certain monk Panfilko from neighboring Kazan used ground bones of other “schismatics” burned at the stake in order to keep others in obedience.<sup>278</sup>

It is difficult to determine how trustworthy these confessions are considering that they were acquired under torture. Even though confessions made under the duress of judicial torture were considered legitimate proof at the time, we should not rely on it wholeheartedly.<sup>279</sup> After all, the aims of historical research and legal investigation are drastically different: the latter seeks to confirm or refute the charges, while the former attempts to reconstruct the cultural, social, political, or economic context of the case under study. Besides, these specific accusations, lustfulness and the use of magic, trigger additional suspicion in their plausibility due to the rich Christian polemical tradition in Russia and Western Europe alike that portrayed perceived religious deviance

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<sup>277</sup> Shashkov, “Neizvestnyi document 1675 g., 80.

<sup>278</sup> Ibid., 81.

<sup>279</sup> On the use of testimonies acquired under torture in historical research: Valerie Kivelson, *Desperate Magic: The Moral Economy of Witchcraft in Seventeenth-century Russia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013), 40-43. More on the torture as a “queen of proofs” in the medieval judicial system see in: Edward Peters, *Torture* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), esp. 47-54. On the judicial institution of torture in Early Modern Russia see in: Evgenii Anisimov, *Dyba i knut: Politicheskii sysk i russkoe obshchestvo v XVIII veke* (Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 1999), 397-454.

in the most lurid way.<sup>280</sup> The accusations of sexual lechery attributed to people labeled as heretics or apostates was a common theme in Russian ecclesiastical tractates and judicial trials since the end of the seventeenth century, most likely due to the influence of Catholic and Protestant theology.<sup>281</sup>

The charges about the ground bones, i.e. the use of sorcery, is more difficult to dismiss due to the fact that according to the *voevoda*'s report, some burned bones were in fact found among the monk Panfilko's belongings. A.T. Shashkov, the researcher who discovered this document, concluded that Panfilko's use of magic is more than possible due to the "popular syncretism of the Orthodoxy and paganism," common in the era.<sup>282</sup> The idea of "syncretism," also known as "double-faith" (*dvoeverie*), allegedly occurring among the Eastern Slavs even today, has been successfully debunked and dismissed as groundless in recent decades.<sup>283</sup> It is impossible to deny, however, that the belief in magic was an integral part of early modern Russians' worldview.<sup>284</sup> Shashkov also found supporting evidence in the ecclesiastical polemical works of a later period, particularly in Bishop Dimitrii of Rostov's tract *An Examination of the Schismatic Brynian Faith* (*Rozysk o raskol' nicheskoi Brynskoii vere*) (1709).<sup>285</sup> The tract described an astonishingly similar

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<sup>280</sup> See, for example: Norman Cohn, *Europe's Inner Demons: An Enquiry Inspired by the Great Witch-Hunt* (London: Chatto: Heinemann for Sussex University Press, 1975); Gary K. Waite, *Heresy, Magic, and Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe* (Basingstoke; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), and many others. On the perception of sex and sexual deviancy in Russia see: Eve Levin, *Sex and Society in the World of Orthodox Slavs, 900-1700* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989).

<sup>281</sup> A.A. Panchenko, *Khristovshchina i skopchestvo: Fol'klor i traditsionnaia kul'tura russkikh misticheskikh sekt* (Moscow: OGI, 2004), 154-171; Olga Tsapina, "The Image of the Quaker and Critique of Enthusiasm in Early Modern Russia," *Russian History*, 24, no. 3 (Fall 1997), 258-262.

<sup>282</sup> Shashkov, "Neizvestnyi document 1675 g.," 78.

<sup>283</sup> Zhivov, "Dvoeverie i osobyi kharakter russkoi kul'turnoi istorii", 306-316; Levin, "Dvoeverie and Popular Religion," 31-52; Lavrov, *Koldovstvo i religiia v Rossii*, 75-88; Rock, *Popular Religion in Russia*, esp. chapter 3.

<sup>284</sup> Recent comprehensive studies of magical beliefs and practices in pre-Modern Russia: William F. Ryan, *The Bathhouse at Midnight: An Historical Survey of Magic and Divination in Russia* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999); Lavrov, *Koldovstvo i religiia v Rossii*; E.B. Smilianskaia, *Volshebnykh Bogokhul'nykh. Eretiki. Narodnaia religioznost' i "dukhovnye prestupleniia" v Rossii XVIII v.* (Moscow: Indrik, 2003); Kivelson, *Desperate Magic*.

<sup>285</sup> Shashkov, "Neizvestnyi document 1675 g.," 77-78.

story, in which appeared “burned bones” dissolved in drinking water. Whoever drank it ended their lives in self-immolation, the author affirmed.<sup>286</sup> Still, the defaming purpose of Dimitrii’s work and its reliance on hearsay and clearly fictitious stories, such as the ones depicting the exercise of ritual murder among dissenters, makes this source questionable for the study of beliefs and practices.<sup>287</sup>

It is possible that Panfilko preserved the remains of the dissidents burned at the stake as martyrs’ relics, a tangible testimony of their suffering for the only true faith. Notwithstanding, the accusations of fornication and sorcery served the goal of proving the illegitimate and un-Orthodox nature of their “schismaticity” (*roskolstvo*). Besides, by raising charges of magical manipulation with burned bones, the authorities not only demonstrated Panfilko’s evil intentions but also assured for him a clear path to the stake, since sorcery was a crime punishable by death in accordance with contemporary Muscovite legislation.<sup>288</sup>

In the end, Viatka authorities burned Panfilko, together with a certain Ivashko and seven self-proclaimed nuns at the stake “in accordance with the great sovereign’s ukase.” Two more of the arrested “schismatics” died during the interrogation and torture sessions, while thirteen others “withdrew from the church schism, and [started to] attend the God’s Church and liturgical singing.”<sup>289</sup> This Viatka case was certainly not unique in its severity towards dissidents, however, it clearly demonstrates that state officials prosecuted the “schismatic” cases as soon as church hierarchs recognized their danger. Still, the charges the state authorities brought against the dissenters were limited to disobedience to church authority rather than the deviance in teaching.

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<sup>286</sup> See part 3, chapter 15 of the *Rozysk*: Dimitrii (Tuptalo), mitropolit, *Rozysk o raskolnicheskoi brynskoï vere, o uchenii ikh, o delakh ikh* (Moscow: Sinodal’naia tipografiia, 1762), f. 24 (new pagination).

<sup>287</sup> For more on the ritual murder in Dimitrii’s work and in the context of Russian history in general see in: Panchenko, *Khristovshchina i skopchestvo*, 154-171; Idem., “Krovavaia etnografiia: legenda o ritual’nom ubiistve i presledovanie religioznykh men’shinstv,” *Otechestvennye zapiski*, vol. 58, no. 1 (2014).

<sup>288</sup> The decree prescribing capital punishment for performing sorcery was issued in 1653. T.A. Oparina, “Neizvestnyi ukaz 1653 g. o zapreshchenii koldovstva,” in *Drevniaia Rus’. Voprosy medievistiki*, no. 9 (2002), 88-91.

<sup>289</sup> Shashkov, “Neizvestnyi document 1675 g.,” 80-82. Four of the inmates managed to escape the monastery jail. *Ibid.*

### **The Twelve Articles on “Schismatics”**

In 1681 in Moscow another Council of the Russian Church hierarchs gathered. It aimed to resolve some of the urgent questions of church life, including civil punishment for the dissidents. In accordance with the existing tradition, Tsar Feodor Alekseevich (1676-1628) directed a set of questions to the hierarchs that concerned the matters that required immediate “correction” (*ispravlenie*). One of the tsar’s concerns pointed to “many unwise people,” who gather for praying in their own houses instead of the parish churches and tell “terrible slanders about the Holy Church.” The Council recognized in these people the “seducers and apostates” (*razvratniki i otstupniki*) that had already been tried at the Council of 1666-1667. The hierarchs asked the tsar to reaffirm the previous commitment to try and punish in accordance with “civil judgement” (*gradskoi sud*) those “adversaries” (*protivniki*) and “schismatics” who “would not obey to the Holy Church.”<sup>290</sup>

The events of the *strel'tsy* rebellion that took place soon after completion of the Council, gave the church hierarchy an additional argument in favor of more state involvement in church affairs. *The Spiritual Exhortation* (*Uvet dukhovnyi*), written in Patriarch Ioakim’s name soon after the violent suppression of Nikita Dobrynin’s and his associates’ attempt to restore the “old faith,” insisted that civil authorities represented by the pious tsars ought to assist the Church in the struggle against the “schismatics and mutineers.” In the eyes of *The Spiritual Exhortation*’s author canon law laid a foundation for such a demand: “Churches always have demanded assistance and help from the pious tsars. Tsars, in their turn, should offer it to them as true proponents of the faith, so

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<sup>290</sup> *AI*, t. 5 (1676-1700), no. 75 (Council’s rulings following the tsar’s propositions, November 1681), 111-112.

that [the Churches] are not offended by heretics, or lawless people.”<sup>291</sup> *The Spiritual Exhortation*’s demand was not a mere reaction to the dramatic events that took place in Moscow in summer of 1682, but rather a continuation of a consistent call on the part of the Russian Church for more active civil involvement in the persecution of the church dissent.

The central government had also received disturbing news from the provinces about the appearance of dissent and ordered comprehensive investigation of such cases.<sup>292</sup> One of the reports on “schismatics” came in July, 1684, from Viatka again: the governor (*voevoda*) Mikhailo Lykov reported to Moscow that local authorities discovered a “schismatic” hermitage settled by self-proclaimed monks and nuns near the village (*sloboda*) Kukarka in the southern part of Viatka province (*uezd*). There were 29 people living in the hermitage together with their spiritual leader, the elder Nikon Kropanev. During the raid on the hermitage, soldiers arrested eight monks and nuns, including Nikon himself, and killed seven more hermits. The rest of the hermitage inhabitants managed to escape.<sup>293</sup> Later Nikon acknowledged that there were other monastic communities in the area. To the dissatisfaction of the Viatka authorities, all of these hermitages were located on territory under the jurisdiction of Kazanskii *uezd*, and hence could not be destroyed immediately.<sup>294</sup>

According to the *voevoda*’s report, the “schismatic” elder Nikon confessed at the interrogation that while in the hermitage, he “received other elders’ and eldresses’ confessions and baptized infants,” even though he was “a regular monk and has never been a priest.” Allegedly,

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<sup>291</sup> *Uvet dukhovnyi*, ff. 48 v.-49. See the canon 94 of the Local Council in Carthage (411 AD) as published in: *Kormchaia*, f. 155.

<sup>292</sup> See, for example, the tsars’ letter to the Metropolitan Kornilii of Novgorod in regard to numerous “church schismatics” that “spread discord in the God’s churches” and disobey their hierarch (“nepokorny i neposlushny”). *AI*, t. 5 (1676-1700), no. 100 (Tsar’s letter to metropolitan Kornilii, November 14, 1682), 161-162.

<sup>293</sup> I.V. Pochinskaia, “Iz istorii staroobriadchestva Viatskogo kraia XVII v.,” in *Rossii i mir: Panorama istoricheskogo razvitiia. Sbornik nauchnykh statei, posviashchennyi 70-letiiu istoricheskogo fakul’teta Ural’skogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta im. A.M. Gor’kogo* (Ekaterinburg: NPMP “Volot,” 2008), 245.

<sup>294</sup> *Ibid.*

Nikon also “together with his councilors circulated blasphemous and manuscript sheets that were reviling towards God’s Church.”<sup>295</sup> In August of 1684 Viatka authorities received an order from Moscow to put Nikon Kopanev on the rack concerning his “schism” (*raskol'stvo*) and ask him and his “companions” (*tovarishchi*) “whether they submit to the God’s Church and use the sign of the cross with three fingers and would receive the Eucharist” in the official Church. The elder remained adamant: he “would not obey in anything,” as the report put it.<sup>296</sup> Apparently, the use of the sign of the cross with three fingers, which became a hallmark of the Old Belief, was an important part of the category of “schism/schismaticity” (*raskolstvo*) used in the official documents, however, it arose in the context of a larger issue of obedience to church discipline.

The document about Nikon Kopanev also included an example of a Novgorod resident Efimko Alekseev who illegitimately performed priestly duties in rural areas. In particular, he “baptized infants again, and re-baptized some adults and gave them new names, while he was a lay man, not a priest.” The sentence in Efimko Alekseev’s case was capital punishment notwithstanding his submission and acceptance of the Eucharist. At the same time, the people who gave their infants to him for baptism as well as the ones who agreed to recurrent baptism themselves deserved knouting in addition to a church penance.<sup>297</sup> The Moscow authorities used Efimko’s sentence as a precedent for Nikon’s case.

Based on these two cases, from Viatka and Novgorod, the trio of “great sovereigns” concluded in September 1684 that the elder Nikon Kopanev should be brought to obedience, or otherwise be put to death:

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<sup>295</sup> Ibid., 245.

<sup>296</sup> Ibid., 245-246.

<sup>297</sup> Ibid., 246-247. Monk Karion Istomin (1640s-1718/1722) in his contemporary exhortation to “blessed Christians” mentions the case of thirty or so “schismatics” put to death in Novgorod in 1683 for preaching the end of the world, encouraging self-immolation, and performing baptisms. Efimko Alekseev might have been one of them. S.N. Brailovskii, *Odin iz pestykh XVII-go stoletia* (St. Petersburg: tipografiia Imperatorskoi Akademii nauk, 1902) (*Zapiski Imperatorskoi Akademii nauk*, t. 5), 415.

take that unfrocked monk Nikonka to the central square in Viatka and execute him after an interrogation, [however,] examine him during the execution, whether he obeys God's church and would partake of the holy sacraments, or whether he would continue to *hold a schism against* God's church and instruct faint-hearted others to do it; and if he concedes and swears not to do it again, throw him into an underground jail until the ukase... But if he does not concede, burn him at the stake on the charges of *theft* and *heresy*.<sup>298</sup>

Unfortunately, it is unknown to us whether Nikon Kopanev repented or ended his life at the Viatka central square. It is clear, however, that the central government in Moscow paid great attention to his and other similar cases and took steps to intensify the prosecution of church dissenters.

In April 1685 the tsars' decree elaborating on the reported crimes of "schismatics" and their associates was promulgated.<sup>299</sup> The decree was in fact an addition to the ukase of Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich's ukase discussed above, prescribing death at the stake for "schismatics" who would not "obey the Eastern Apostolic Church" consistently.<sup>300</sup> It became known in the historiography as Tsarevna? Sofia's "twelve articles on schismatics," even though formally her younger brothers Ivan and Peter reigned over Muscovy. In fact, Sofia was effectively ruling the country on behalf of her brothers since the suppression of the Moscow rebellion at the end of 1682.

Borrowing from the ecclesiastical polemical discourse, the decree affirmed: "schismatics" (*raskolshchiki*) are "chaff sowers and defamers of the Holy Church."<sup>301</sup> It also invoked the

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<sup>298</sup> Pochinskaia, "Iz istorii staroobriadchestva," 247.

<sup>299</sup> Often, this decree is dated to the end of 1684 following its publication in the volume of the *PSZ*. The correct date is April 7, 1685. For more on the problem of the decree's attribution see: E.S. Grishin, "K voprosu o publikatsiakh '12 statei o raskol'nikakh' tsarevny Sof'i," in *Materialy Mezhdunarodnogo molodezhnogo nauchnogo foruma "Lomonosov-2010,"* ed. by I.A. Aleshkovskii, et al., electronic source (Moscow: MAKSS Press, 2010).

<sup>300</sup> *AAE*, t. 4 (1645-1700), no. 284 (Articles about "schismatics," April 7, 1685), 420. The Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich's ukase see in: A.T. Shashkov, "Neizvestnyi dokument 1675 g.," 82.

More on the date of the twelve articles' passing see: Grishin, "K voprosu o publikatsiakh '12 statei o raskol'nikakh'."

<sup>301</sup> *AAE*, t. 4 (1645-1700), 421.

polemical labels “heresy” and “deception” (*prelest*, *prelestnoe uchenie*) in reference to their teachings. Yet, it is important to stress that unlike the polemical tracts the articles did not intend to describe the specifics of the “schismatics” spiritual errors, but rather aimed to define their criminal actions, or “theft” (*vorovstvo*), a term commonly used in Russia to signify different sorts of criminal activity. Those crimes were: failure to attend church services or partake in the sacraments of confession and Eucharist; defaming the Church (*khulu vozlagaiut*); persuading others to commit self-immolation; and performing illicit baptisms, that is re-baptizing already baptized Orthodox Christians, claiming their original baptism to be “untrue” (*nepravoe*).<sup>302</sup> In a word, the “schismatics” both engaged in “opposition to the Church” (*tserkovnaia protivnost*) and caused “temptation (*soblazn*) and mutiny (*miatezh*) among Christians.”<sup>303</sup> Interestingly enough, the decree did not mention the old books or pre-Nikonian rituals.

The decree listed burning at the stake, knouting, exile, property confiscation, monastery confinement, penance at the discretion of local bishop, and spiritual oversight for the people condemned for “schisms” and “opposition to the Church.” However, it inflicted capital punishment upon “schismatics” only if they failed to comply with the church even under torture. There were important exceptions to this rule: whoever among them performed rebaptisms or prompted self-immolation, was to be burned at the stake no matter what, “without mercy.”<sup>304</sup>

It is universally assumed that the decree was directed against the Old Believers. However, the document’s language is more complicated than that: under the term “schismatics” it assumed some “teachers” who deceived simple people by spreading falsehoods against the official Church, rather than a group of people who shared the same views in regard of the new liturgical practice

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<sup>302</sup> *Ibid.*, 420-421.

<sup>303</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>304</sup> *Ibid.*, 420-421.



as the term Old Believers implies. The decree clearly distinguished between the “teachers,” i.e. “schismatics” and simple (*prostoliudimy*), among whom only the latter could escape with a spiritual penalty only and be released on surety. Therefore, the decree portrayed “schismatics” not as a group or sect, let alone a religious movement or teaching, but rather as individuals hostile to the Church. In its characterization of “schismatics” and specific vocabulary the decree replicated the apocalyptically charged biblical prophecy about the final days, popular among both the champions of the new books and their opponents: “For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them” (Acts 20:29-30).

### **Identifying Heretics**

The category of “schismatic” remained one of many ecclesiastical labels the church polemicists attached to their adversaries right until the very end of the seventeenth century. It was used in regard to people who opposed the Church for any reason as frequently as canonically defined concepts of *heretics* (*eretiki*), and sometimes even *apostates* (*otstupnitsy*) were used. The categories of “schism” (or often in the plural – “schisms”) and “schismatic” still retained the sense of an attempt to disrupt the Holy Church, not secede from it due to disagreement over some question. This category did not yet signify a specific group of church dissidents or their teachings. The process of clarification was underway, however.

Dissident clerics and church polemicists alike “recognized” the deviant teaching in each other and tried to assign it a proper name. Already in the 1650s, the book called *The Tablet* (*Skrizhal'*) that manifested the Nikon’s “corrections” declared the sign of the cross with two fingers to bear the mark of the ancient Arian, Sabellian, and Nestorian “heresies,” condemned by

the Ecumenical Councils for the allegedly erroneous teaching about the Trinity and the nature of Jesus Christ.<sup>305</sup> A decade later, *The Rod of Rulership* (*Zhezl pravleniia*) also recognized the likeness of “the newly appeared apostates” Avvakum Petrov, Nikita Dobrynin and others to such ancient “heretics” as Arius, Nestorius, Sabellius, or Macedonius.<sup>306</sup>

*The Tablet* made another very important claim about the nature of the protests against the new sign of the cross: it connected it to the so-called “Armenian heresy,” that is the allegedly monophysitic teachings of the contemporary Armenian Apostolic Church.<sup>307</sup> The documents of the Moscow Church Council of 1666 developed this thesis further: the Council attested that the sign of the cross with two fingers was indeed a mark of the “Armenian heresy” and tried to explain why Russian Orthodox believers came to regard an erroneous sign of the cross as the only true one. Apparently, it was a conspiracy of “certain schismatic and secret heretic of Armenian heresy” who managed to inject his heterodoxy into some of the books published in Muscovy prior to Patriarch Nikon.<sup>308</sup> In the next century and a half, church polemicists would expand this dubious assertion and discover the roots of the dissent in the first centuries of Christianity in Russia.

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<sup>305</sup> *Skrizhal'*, ff. 796-797, 812-813.

<sup>306</sup> *Zhezl pravleniia*, f. 12 v.

<sup>307</sup> *Skrizhal'*, ff. 796, 812-812 ob. The Armenian Apostolic Church is one among many other ancient Orthodox churches that only recognize the decisions of the first three Ecumenical Councils, namely the Councils of Nicea (325), of Constantinople (381), and of Ephesus (431). These churches did not accept the decisions of the Council of Chalcedon (451), which affirmed the two natures of Jesus Christ coexisting inseparably in one physical body. For that reason, the Christian churches that recognize all seven of the Ecumenical Councils consider the teachings of the Armenian Apostolic Church about the nature of Jesus Christ erroneous (heretical) and often referred to it as monophysitic, i.e. viewing Christ's manhood and divinity as separate entities. The Armenian theologians, in their turn, reject the accusations and assert that both divine and human natures of Jesus are inseparable as they form one entity (miaphysitism).

<sup>308</sup> “Kniga sobornykh deianii,” in *Materialy dlia istorii raskola*, t. 2, ch. 2 (1876), 237. The other side of the debate, on its turn, also maintained that the new church rites were “adopted from the Armenians and from the Romans,” i.e. Catholics. “Izlozhenie del ob Avvakume, Lazare, Epifanii, Fedore I pod'iake Fedore. 1667 g.,” in *Ibid.*, 28.

### *Kapitonians and the “Armenian Heresy”*

Various seventeenth-century documents employ a very curious term “kapitonians” (*kapitony*), derived from the name of the semi-mythical elder Kapiton.<sup>309</sup> The church polemicists and state officials alike connected a whole array of different allegations with it: opposition to the authorities, spread of apocalyptic anxiety, acts of suicide, and the adherence to the “Armenian heresy,” among others. Following these documents many scholars interpreted the term “kapitonians” either as a synonym to Old Believers, or identified it with a separate “kapitonian” sect.<sup>310</sup> In fact, it should be understood through the complex context of religious polemic rather than as a signifier for a certain group of people or a specific set of beliefs or practices.

The term “kapitonians” as a pejorative label for the dissenters was in use in church polemics already in the 1660s.<sup>311</sup> It appeared also in the documents of the Solovki rebellion, this time with strong conspiratorial connotations. The elder Pakhomii who ran away from the mutinous Solovki monastery in June, 1673 asserted during his interrogation that the “kapitonians” stand behind the rebellion. According to Pakhomii, “many kapitonians of monastic and lay ranks” recently arrived at Solovki and turned its brethren against the Church: now the Solovki monks are defending the “kapitonian teachings” (*kapitonstvo*) instead of “the [true] faith,” concluded the runaway.<sup>312</sup>

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<sup>309</sup> More on elder Kapiton see: Zenkovsky, *Russkoe staroobriadchestvo*, 144-156; Rumiantseva, “Eres’ Kapitona i pravoslavnaia tserkov’,” 95-113; Idem., *Narodnoe antitserkovnoe dvizhenie*, 77-78; Crummey, “Religious Radicalism in Seventeenth-Century Russia,” 52-67.

<sup>310</sup> For example: Rumiantseva, *Narodnoe antitserkovnoe dvizhenie v Rossii*; A.V. Borodkin, *Staroobriadcheskie tsentry i obshchiny Verkhnego Povolzh’ia vo vtoroi polovine XVII-nachale XVIII vv.* (Iaroslavl’: Izd-vo IaGTU, 2010).

<sup>311</sup> See the priest Ioann’s “Disputation of the Orthodox against the kapitons about the true faith” (*Spor pravoslavnykh s liutymi kapitony o pravoii vere*). Smirnov, *Vnutrennie voprosy v raskole*, CXX; G.M. Prokhorov, “Ioann,” in *SKKDR*, vyp 3, ch. 2 (1993), 62-63.

<sup>312</sup> “Akty, otносиashchiesia k istorii Solovetskago bunta,” in *ChOIDR*, kn. 4 (1883), 80. The reference to the connection between the *kapitonians* and the contemporary Cossack revolt led by Stepan Razin (1670-1671), gave Soviet historians an additional argument as to the anti-feudal and antimonarchical nature of the Solovki rebellion. See particularly: Kartsov, *Religiozni raskol kak forma antifeodal’nogo protesta*; Rumiantseva, *Narodnoe antitserkovnoe dvizhenie*.

The ecclesiastical writers further developed the conspiratorial theme of the “kapitonian” dissent in relation to the 1682 *strel'tsy* rebellion in Moscow. Patriarch Ioakim in his *Admonition* (*Pouchenie*) against Nikita Dobrynin and his associates denounced the “mad kapitonians” (*bezumnye kapitony*) for spreading rumors that the changes in the liturgical books and the faith itself “inflicted great disasters on the Muscovite state, crop failure, and disorders.”<sup>313</sup> Ioakim likened their “deceitful teachings” (*lzhivoe uchenie*) to a “spider web” (*pauchinoe tkanie*) for simple people, for thanks to these “foes of God” many people had abandoned their sovereigns, pastors, and the Church itself.<sup>314</sup> There should be no faith in such “schismatics of the Holy Church,” “apostates,” and “Devil’s pupils,” concluded Ioakim.<sup>315</sup> Obviously, in this context the category of “schismatic” was of a more general quality than “kapitonians”: the former referred to a type of ecclesiastical crime, while the latter signified a specific people, spreading particular teachings.

Soon after the dramatic events of the 1682 *strel'tsy* rebellion its witness monk Sil'vestr Medvedev thoroughly described the direct involvement of the “kapitonians” in a struggle over political power. “Seeing the servicemen’s utter impudence and discord in the state, the foes of the holy church, *schismatics called Kapitonians*, initiated an offensive on the Holy Church and a disturbance among simple people,” explained Medvedev.<sup>316</sup> He specified the name of the

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<sup>313</sup> Ioakim, [*Slovo na Nikitu Pustosviata*], f. 14.

<sup>314</sup> *Ibid.*, f. 13 ob.

<sup>315</sup> *Ibid.*, ff. 14 v.-16. The corrector of Moscow printing house monk Evfimii Chudovskii referred to “kapitonians” in the late 1670s in a similar way. Commenting in the margins of polemical work against the opponents of Nikon’s “reform” written by his mentor monk Epifanii Slavinteskii’s (d. 1675) Evfimii clarified for his prospective reader that the “newly appeared secret teachers” (*novoiavlennye tainouchitelie*) Epifanii denounced are in fact “the ones called *kapitony* and other schismatics” (*sitsevii sut' kapitony zovemia i inii raskolnitsy*). (T.V. Panich, “Slovo ‘Na nepokorniki tserkvi’ – pamiatnik rannei antistarobriadcheskoi polemiki,” 162, 174.)

<sup>316</sup> Sil'vestr Medvedev, “Sozertsanie kratkoe let 7190, 91 i 92, v nikh zhe chto sodeiasia v grazhdanstve,” in *ChOIDR*, kn. 4 (1894), 76. Medvedev’s close associate and likely a coauthor of the work under scrutiny, monk Karion Istomin (1640s-1718/1722), also depicted the revolt of the “evil kapitonians” in poetry. One of his poems described its initial stage as follows: “When rose up the evil kapitonians / Who are making the Holy Church groan/ they wished to ruin the Church of Russians / and madly deceive the people with their malice.” Brailovskii, *Odin iz pstrykh XVII-go*

“kapitonian” leader: the defrocked priest Nikita Dobrynin. The headman of the rebellious *strel'tsy*, Prince Ivan Khovanskii, allegedly actively assisted the dissenters pursuing his own political gains, the primary one being the physical elimination of Patriarch Ioakim.<sup>317</sup>

Bureaucratic documents issued during the rebellion replicated Ioakim's and Medvedev's language. Specifically, the death sentence for Prince Ivan Khovanskii, among other things inculpated him with protecting Nikita Dobrynin and his associates, characterized as “evil-doing *kapitonians*” (*zlotvortsy kapitony*), “damned schismatics,” and “mutineers of the Holy Church and of all the state.”<sup>318</sup>

In addition to providing its readers with crucial details about the *strel'tsy* revolt, Sil'vestr Medvedev affirmed the essentially “heretical” nature of the “kapitonian” teachings. Medvedev explained that these “schismatics” use the sign of the cross with two fingers, just like the Armenians who “make the sign of the cross with two fingers folded in a way to manifest the inequality of the Divinity in the Holy Trinity.”<sup>319</sup> He added the allegations to a graphic description of the final scene of the disputation Nikita Dobrynin and his supporters had with the church hierarchs on July 5, 1682 in Kremlin:

Schismatics... and their damned chief Nikita, to whom all of the kapitonians look, has folded his fingers in accordance with the Armenian heresy, lifted his filthy hands up, and cried for a long time... [and] all of kapitonians screamed [with him], as if they were impelled by Devil: “Such! such! this way! this way! a! a! a! a!”<sup>320</sup>

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*stoletii*, 429. See also a similar poem cited in: L.I. Sazonova, *Literaturnaia kul'tura Rossii. Rannee Novoe vremia* (Moscow: Iazyki slavianskikh kul'tur, 2006), 82.

<sup>317</sup> Sil'vestr Medvedev, “Sozertsanie kratkoe let,” 76-83. Two decades later Count Andrei Matveev (1666-1728) in his historical account of the 1682 rebellion speculated that Prince Khovanskii in fact “kept secretly at his home old *schismatics* of the *kapitonian heretical schism*, Avvakum... and his accomplices.” “Zapiski Andreia Artamonovicha grafa Matveeva,” in *Zapiski russkikh liudei. Sobytiia vremen Petra Velikago* (St. Petersburg: v tipografii Sakharova, 1841), 38.

<sup>318</sup> *Sobranie gosudarstvennykh gramot i dogovorov, khraniashchikhsia v Gosudarstvennoi Kollegii inostrannykh del*, ch. 4 (Moscow: v tipografii S. Selivanovskago, 1826), 461.

<sup>319</sup> Sil'vestr Medvedev, “Sozertsanie kratkoe let,” 89.

<sup>320</sup> Ibid.

There was nothing new in Medvedev's assertion about the "Armenian heresy" as it repeated the charges church authorities already made in 1650s and 1660s. Still, it was a highly dubious claim, which automatically deemed heretical the entire pre-Nikonian Russian Orthodoxy, rather than just Nikita Dobrynin and other "schismatics" like him. Medvedev's explanation lacked necessary nuance.

A decade later, in 1690s, Metropolitan Ignatii of Tobol'sk and Siberia (1693-1700) finally elucidated the assertion about the "Armenian heresy" manifested in the sign of the cross. Concerned with the spread of self-immolation cases in his expansive bishopric, Ignatii issued three pastoral letters to the Orthodox Christians of Siberia, in which he warned the flock against the "kapitonians" and their "Armenian heresy."<sup>321</sup>

Ignatii started the first letter with a statement of the diabolical origin of all of the ancient and current "heresies" and the apocalyptic menace their appearance bears. The "heretics of our age," Ignatii explained, are "called kapitonians, but in fact [they are] Armenians." Their leaders are the "pseudo-monk" (*lzhechernets*) Os'ka Astomen, alias Iosif Istomin, an "apostate" Iakun'ka Lepikhin, and "pseudo-monk" Avramko the Hungarian, alias Avramko the Jew (*zhidovin*). It is them, Ignatii exclaimed, about whom Jesus had said: "For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and... they shall deceive the very elect." (Matthew 24:24).<sup>322</sup> Ignatii explained that these "heretics" taught against attending church; accepting the sacraments, such as baptism, marriage, confession, and Eucharist from the parish priests; and interacting with sacred objects. Ultimately, the "kapitonians" encouraged some delusional people to engage in self-immolation: "they

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<sup>321</sup> More on the letters: A.T. Shashkov, "Sibirskii Mitropolit Ignatii i 'delo' Iosifa Astomena," in *Vlast', pravo i narod na Urale v epokhu feodalizma* (Sverdlovsk: UrO AN SSSR, 1991), 36-49; Bogdanov, *Ot letopisaniia k issledovaniiu*, 203-206.

<sup>322</sup> *Poslaniia blazhennago Ignatii*, 10-12.

commanded their followers to put themselves to death in flames, as if it is some sort of diabolical baptism.”<sup>323</sup>

However, the most emblematic aspect of the “kapitonian” teachings, in which Ignatii recognized the so-called “Armenian heresy” was the use of the sign of the cross with two fingers, “like Armenian heretics do,” instead of the sign with three fingers, as Patriarch Nikon directed in the new liturgical books. Ignatii explained the underlying theological difference between the two in the similar fashion to *The Tablet (Skrizhal’)*, which introduced Nikon’s liturgical changes:

Those ungodly Armenians and their disciples, semi-Armenians, propose [to manifest the three persons of the Holy Trinity using] thumb and two last fingers, while [they] assert to form one of the Trinity’s persons, the Son of God, in the middle and index fingers, thus dividing him into two persons, because the composition of [two] fingers signifies [two] persons. See, devotees of the blessed Christ and offspring of the Holy Church, the heresy of those evil-doers and semi-Armenians, how they offend the Triune God, when [they] signify the Holy Trinity not in the equal fingers, but in the thumb, fourth, and little fingers.”<sup>324</sup>

To intensify the accusations Ignatii alleged that the “heretics” do wrong not only in the sign of the cross itself, but even in the way they execute it. In particular, unlike the Orthodox who carefully lay the three fingers in turn on the forehead, abdomen (*chrevo*), right and then left shoulder, the dissenters “wave” (*mashut*) with the two fingers around their body, without ever touching the imagined ends of the crucifix.<sup>325</sup>

The sign of the cross was not the only aspect the Siberian dissenters Iosif Astomen and his followers erred in, according to Ignatii. “There is no heresy that those damned semi-Armenians would not hold,” he exclaimed. He charged them specifically with adherence to the erroneous

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<sup>323</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>324</sup> *Ibid.*, 50.

<sup>325</sup> *Ibid.*, 51.

Christological teachings of such ancient heresiarchs as Arius (III-IV c.), Macedonius (IV c.), and Nestorius (V c.), as well as with practicing libertinism and self-immolation in the likeness of an obscure Early Christian sects of Adamites and Messalians.<sup>326</sup> Ignatii also identified elements of Protestantism in the Siberian “Armenian heresy,” thus demonstrating good familiarity with contemporary confessional debates, too.<sup>327</sup> According to the Siberian metropolitan, “heretic” Iosif Astomen and his associates “just like the damned Calvins and Luthers, dismiss all of the Holy tradition,” as a result, Astomen and his followers interpret the Holy Scripture “in an evil and corrupt way.”<sup>328</sup> Ignatii also found that the Russian dissenters resemble their Western counterparts as they encroach upon the priesthood in both word and in practice. The metropolitan illustrated this with the fact that the laymen among the “heretics” dare to administer confessions and communion using self-prepared consecrated bread, administer monastic vows, perform funeral services over the deceased, and baptize the newly born, “just like Calvins, by dunking them in the tub.”<sup>329</sup> They “obviously are just like the damned heretics Luthers and Calvins in essence,” concluded Ignatii.<sup>330</sup>

Still, Metropolitan Ignatii had an even more radical accusation against Iosif Astomen and other “semi-Armenians,” in particular that they were forerunners of the Antichrist, no less.<sup>331</sup> Their “blasphemy” (*khula*) against the Holy Church attested to it clearly, affirmed the metropolitan, yet that was not all: the very name of their leader, Astomen,<sup>332</sup> concealed the number of the beast

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<sup>326</sup> *Ibid.*, 60-61.

<sup>327</sup> Prior to the appointment at the Siberian cathedral, Ignatii authored several polemical treatises against the Protestants and their teachings. O.A. Belobrova, A.P. Bogdanov, “Ignatii,” in *SKKDR*, vyp. 3, ch. 2 (1993), 27.

<sup>328</sup> *Poslaniia blazhennago Ignatii*, 27.

<sup>329</sup> *Ibid.*, 28-29, 60-61.

<sup>330</sup> *Ibid.*, 61.

<sup>331</sup> *Ibid.*, 62. This was a reply to the “heretics” assertion that “whoever makes the sign of the cross with three fingers of right hand, is stamping himself with the Antichrist’s sign.” *Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>332</sup> Ignatii himself admitted that Iosif was known by the last name of Istomin (this version of name sums up to the number of 676, not 666), however, as it was known to the Metropolitan, his “real” surname was in fact Astomen.



prophesized in the book of Revelation (Rev. 13:18). The letter “A” stands for number 1, “S” – for 200, “T” – for 300, “O” – for 70, “M” – for 40, “E” – for 5, “N” – for 50; in sum totaling 666.<sup>333</sup> Ignatii observed apocalyptically that Apostle Peter’s prophesy about false teachers and false prophets appearing at the end of the world (2 Peter 2:1) “is coming into being in today’s semi-Armenians.”<sup>334</sup>

Ignatii supported his striking discovery with even more astounding examples of the evils the “semi-Armenians” had committed. For example, the aforesaid “heretics” appeared to be directly connected to the “sorcerers and enchanter, that is necromancers,” who have made a pact with the Devil.<sup>335</sup> Those “necromancers” were Fetka Tarskii from Berezov and Antoshka Chupalov from Tobolsk. They possessed “magical writings” (*charodeistvennaia pisanii*), which they used for various spells and charms.<sup>336</sup> One of them, Fetka, allegedly confessed that he used two fingers in the sign of the cross and criticized the “novelties” in the church in order to conceal himself: due to his relationship with Satan he was not able to enter churches or use the “true” sign of the cross. “Such damned [people] and others like them are the ones who avert you from the Holy Church,” the Siberian hierarch explained to his flock.<sup>337</sup> Ignatii provided many other examples of how the “heretic kapitonians” used “sorcery” (*volkhvovanie*) to win over new followers and propelled them to commit suicide. One of the examples described in detail the sacrifice of an illicitly conceived newly born child: the newborn’s still beating heart was allegedly turned into a magical powder meant to be mixed with the drinking water.<sup>338</sup> It is the first known

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Apparently, Ignatii manipulated with the pronunciation in order to get the right combination of numbers expressed in it.

<sup>333</sup> *Ibid.*, 26-27.

<sup>334</sup> *Ibid.*, 30-31. Using the term “semi-Armenians” Ignatii tried to stress that the dissenters in fact are “neither [fully] Christians, nor [fully] Armenians.” *Ibid.*, 100.

<sup>335</sup> *Ibid.*, 63.

<sup>336</sup> *Ibid.*, 64.

<sup>337</sup> *Ibid.*, 65-66, 69.

<sup>338</sup> *Ibid.*, 115-122, esp. 117-119.

Russian reference to a legend widely dispersed in Central and Western Europe about ritual murder.<sup>339</sup>

Ignatii finally proposed a detailed historical explanation of the “Armenian heresy” in the Russian Church. He dated the corruption of the liturgical books to the mid-sixteenth century: back then some unknown individuals introduced “evil venom” of their “heresy” into the decisions of the *Stoglav* Council, so that it affirmed the “Armenian” sign of the cross with two fingers. However, the Siberian metropolitan attributed the most important role in the dissemination of the “heresy” to the development of book printing in the country: less than a century after the *Stoglav* a group of influential clerics led by Ivan Neronov, Avvakum Petrov, Nikita Dobrynin, and others deliberately corrupted thousands of copies of a number of liturgical books issued by the Moscow printing house with the “Armenian teaching.” “The Armenian stench had filled and infected all of Russia this way,” grieved Ignatii.<sup>340</sup> One of the people so “infected” was an elder Kapiton Kolesnikovskii from Kostroma region, who, in turn, started to preach about the “Armenian” sign of the cross, “and many youngsters had followed him.”<sup>341</sup>

Ignatii also told a dramatic story how Patriarch Nikon came to the realization of the alleged corruption of Russian liturgical books. The Eastern Orthodox hierarchs, visiting Moscow, pointed out to him the discrepancy in the contemporary Greek and Russian church practices. They particularly stressed that the sign of the cross with two fingers instead of three is a “tradition of the thrice damned Armenians.” In order to clarify the issue Patriarch Nikon reportedly sent for the merchants of “the Armenian origin and heresy” conducting business in Moscow. The merchants confirmed that they use the sign of the cross with index and middle fingers put together. At the

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<sup>339</sup> Panchenko, *Khristovshchina i skopchestvo*, 154-171.

<sup>340</sup> *Poslaniia blazhennago Ignatii*, 90-95.

<sup>341</sup> *Ibid.*, 99.

same time, continued Ignatii, they refused to even combine these two fingers with the thumb, as the Greek Orthodox do, because of “the Armenian custom”: “whoever among us should combine the three fingers in the Greek manner, his hand is to be cut off up to the wrist.”<sup>342</sup> Patriarch Nikon was immediately convinced of the errors of Russian church practices and initiated the “correction” program, which spurred a fierce reaction from the side of the aforementioned “heretics” and “kapitonians” Avvakum Petrov, Ivan Neronov, Nikita Dobrynin, Iosif Astomen, and many others.<sup>343</sup>

Ignatii seldom used the term “schismatics,” giving preference to the notions of “heresy” and “apostasy.” His understanding of the term “schism(s)” was many-fold. On the one hand, it reflected the definition common in the seventeenth century Muscovy - an encroachment on the existence of the Church and true faith through the spread of dissent, rather than a division of the church community over formal issues, as canon law would suggest. The archpriest Avvakum together with other opponents of the new books were “schismatics” for Ignatii, because they were “downright foes of God and the tearers of the Holy Church’s theological robe.”<sup>344</sup> This is what canon law would usually regard as “heresy,” or a deviance in faith.<sup>345</sup> It is no surprise, therefore, that in this context Ignatii used the notion of “schismatic” as an umbrella term for all sorts of dissidents, including “heretics” and “apostates,” who were in one or another way disruptive to the Church.<sup>346</sup> This logic worked in reverse, too: whoever was pronounced a “schismatic” automatically became a “heretic” based on the fact of enmity towards the Church. Therefore,

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<sup>342</sup> *Ibid.*, 102-104.

<sup>343</sup> *Ibid.*, 106-109.

<sup>344</sup> *Ibid.*, 137.

<sup>345</sup> Canonical definition of a schismatic: *Kormchaia*, f. 225.

<sup>346</sup> *Poslaniia blazhennago Ignatii*, 113, 125, 143, 147-148, 154, 156, and others. The polemicists in 1670s and 1680s understood the term “schismatics” in a similar way and applied it accordingly. For instance, the monk Evfimii Chudninovskii implied that there are different sorts of “schismatics” when he remarked in the margins of his tutor monk Epifanii Slavinskii’s polemical text that “secret teachers” (*tainouchitelie*) “are the ones called kapitonians and other schismatics”. Panich, “Slovo ‘Na nepokorniki tserkvi’,” 174.

Ignatii's discourse contained such apparently oxymoronic phrases as "the heretic schismatics and kapitoniens."<sup>347</sup>

At the same time, Ignatii's use of the term "schism" indicated the formation of a new understanding of the concept of "schism": as a condition of being outside of the Church. Thus, speaking of Iosif Astomen's (false) repentance, the metropolitan noted that the elder "departed from a schism" (*ot raskola presta*); or, in regard to the same Iosif, who even after the repentance reportedly taught "the simplest [of people] into all sorts of evil schism" (*vo vsiakii zlyi raskol prostshyia pouchaet*).<sup>348</sup> It is noteworthy that that use of the term "schism" resembled the use of the notion of "heresy" as adherence to erroneous teaching.<sup>349</sup> Later, throughout the eighteenth century, the phrases "seduce into the Schism" (*sovratit' v raskol*) or "leave for the Schism" (*uiti v raskol*) would become common in the description of the deviation from the official Orthodoxy. A "schism" was becoming the "Schism."<sup>350</sup>

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<sup>347</sup> *Poslaniia blazhennago Ignatii*, 99.

<sup>348</sup> *Ibid.*, 154, 156.

<sup>349</sup> See, for example, in the 1620s "heretical" case from Vologda: the church authorities imposed a penance on each of the four alleged "heretics" of lay and clerical ranks so that they "returned from the enemy's deception to God and repented of[their] heresy." Cited by: T.A. Oparina, "Delo vologodskikh eretikov," in *Kniga i literatura v kul'turnom kontekste* (Novosibirsk: GPNTB, 2003), 439-446.

<sup>350</sup> The term "kapitoniens" remained in active use at the beginning of the eighteenth century as a synonym for what we understand by the term Old Believers. For example, the documents of Russia's contemporary secret police, the Preobrazhenskii Chancellery, contain interrogation records from 1701 of a certain Mishka who allegedly denounced Patriarch Nikon as a "heretic" and the new books as "heretical." It is in reaction to those books "kapitons" kill themselves by self-immolation, Mishka revealed. (A.V. Arsen'ev, "'Nepriostoinyia rechi' (Iz del Preobrazhenskogo prikaza i Tainoi kantseleiarii, XVIII veka)," *Istoricheskii vestnik*, t. 49 (1897), 60-61). Similarly, the Ukrainian Hetman Ivan Mazepa in his October, 1703, letter to Peter I mentioned "schismatics from Don [river], called kapitony" (Nikolai Markevich, *Istoriia Malorossii*, t. 4 (Moscow: v tipografii Avgusta Semena, 1842), 159). Again the record in the seventeenth-century collection of writings (*Tsvetnik*), dated to 1710 reads: "This book is a collection of different things and mad explanations (*bezumnye gadaniia*), in which reckless schismatics Kapitons have faith in" (*Sbornik otdeleniia russkogo iazyka i slovesnosti Imperatorskoi Akademii nauk*, t. 29 (St. Petersburg: Tipografiia Imperatorskoi Akademii nauk, 1882), 411).

## **Conclusion**

Was the mid-seventeenth century split in the Russian Orthodox Church over the changes in the liturgical practice inevitable? The analysis of the language of ecclesiastical polemic as it developed prior to the conflict over the new books vividly demonstrates that the Church lacked ways to disagree about the spiritual matters in a non-confrontational way. Both the corrector and their opponents viewed the possibility of ecclesiastical change in the same way – as the pursuit of some long past ideal; similarly, both of them described the conflict in cosmological terms – as an episode in the battle between good and evil, the Devil and God’s Church. Not surprisingly, therefore, the Russian church polemicists immediately matched the dissenters with other “heretics” of the past and present: already during the implementation of the corrections Nikon’s associates found the upholders of the two-fingered sign of the cross guilty of the so-called “Armenian heresy,” associated with the fifth-century debates over the natures of Jesus Christ. Later, ecclesiastical polemicists developed this finding further.

Up until the end of the seventeenth century, the term “schismatic” referred first and foremost to the way the church and state authorities viewed disobedience to their authority, rather than to certain people, their beliefs and practices. The ecclesiastical hierarchs, as well as the tsar’s government, perceived the dissidents’ failure to accept the changes as in fact disobedience to the present power structure, a “mutiny” against the existing order of things. In this sense, there was no “Schism” as a dissident movement or coherent teaching in seventeenth-century Muscovy - the concept of it was simply non-existent.

## **PART II. “Schismatics” in Law and Practice**

### **CHAPTER I. The “Schism” as a Legal Category**

Peter I (1682-1725) overthrew his sister Sofia and took the reins of real power in 1689. In less than three decades of his reign Russia went through a process of sweeping cultural transformation. The new sovereign imposed on the society a whole array of changes with the intention of building a new Russia based on the model of its Western counterparts, particularly Holland and Sweden. The changes ranged from the Westernization of dress and everyday behavior to profound changes in the system of government and legislation. Even though Peter’s innovations rested on existing developments underway in seventeenth-century Muscovy, Russian historiography commonly refers to them as “Peter the Great’s reforms,” while American historians justly dubbed them as Peter I’s “revolution.”<sup>351</sup>

The religious life of Russians also experienced seismic changes. Instead of a religious culture with some elements of Western Enlightenment as practiced by Peter’s predecessors, the new sovereign introduced to Russia an alternative, secular sphere that was in many ways opposed to religious culture.<sup>352</sup> Yet, the adoption of Western secular ideals and knowledge in Russia prior to and during Peter’s reign by no means demolished the authority and vigor of the Russian Orthodox Church. As Elise Kimerling Wirtschafter remarked, Russian religious thinkers, just like their Western counterparts, were concerned chiefly with the reconciliation between the new learning and established religious tradition. The Enlightenment in Russia had an undeniable

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<sup>351</sup> The historiography of Peter’s reforms is immense. See, for example: E.V. Anisimov, *The Reforms of Peter the Great: Progress Through Coercion in Russia*, trans. by John T. Alexander (Armonk; New York; London: M.E. Sharpe, 1993); Lindsey Hughes, *Russia in the Age of Peter the Great* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000); Paul Bushkovitch, *Peter the Great: The Struggle for Power, 1671-1725* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); James Cracraft, *The Revolution of Peter the Great* (Harvard University Press, 2006), and many others.

<sup>352</sup> Zhivov, *Iz tserkovnoi istorii vremen Petra Velikogo*, 11.

religious edge.<sup>353</sup>

The term “Enlightenment” (*Aufklärung* in German, *illumination* in French, or *prosveshchenie* in Russian) is used in this dissertation in two meanings, descriptive and prescriptive. On the one hand, it signifies a perspective many thinkers and their adherents predominantly (but not exclusively) in eighteenth-century Europe had on the historic times they were living in. Particularly, these individuals found themselves in the midst of an ongoing process of human liberation from ignorance, superstitions, fanaticism, etc. accompanied with the social advancement towards the rule of reason. One of such thinkers, Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), in his short but immensely influential essay “What is Enlightenment” (1784) succinctly defined thus viewed “enlightenment” as “man’s emergence from his self-imposed immaturity.”<sup>354</sup> The contemporaries were very welcoming of this process, yet skeptical whether they would witness its completion (“If it is now asked: ‘Do we presently live in an enlightened age?’ the answer is: ‘No, but we do live in an age of enlightenment’”).<sup>355</sup> In this sense, “the age of enlightenment” is a self-descriptive term for the period of the “*philosophes*” and thinkers like Voltaire (1694-1778), Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778), Denis Diderot (1713-1784), David Hume (1711-1776), Adam Smith (1723-1790), Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1797), Thomas Paine (1737-1809), or aforementioned Immanuel Kant, as well as “enlightened” rulers, such as Prussian king Frederick II (1740-1786), Habsburg emperor Joseph II (1780-1790), or Russian empress Catherine II (1762-1796), among many others.

On the other hand, this dissertation also treats the “Enlightenment(s),” or the

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<sup>353</sup> Elise Kimerling Wirtschafter, *Religion and Enlightenment in Catherinian Russia: The Teachings of Metropolitan Platon* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2013), 4.

<sup>354</sup> Immanuel Kant, “An Answer to the Question: ‘What is Enlightenment?’,” in Idem., *Perpetual Peace and Other Essays*, trans. by Ted Humphrey (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1983), 41.

<sup>355</sup> Ibid., 44.

“Enlightenment spectrum” (David Sorkin’s term) as umbrella terms designating a long historical period starting with the seventeenth-century philosophers Rene Descartes (1596-1650), Baruch Spinoza (1632-1677), Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679), John Locke (1632-1704), Gottfried Leibnitz (1646-1716), and others, a period when human reason came to be viewed as a sole foundation of knowledge about one’s own self and the world around. This view of the Enlightenment does not take into account the fact that the aforementioned thinkers did not perceive themselves as the champions of a movement or an ideology (for this reason the period of the second half of the eighteenth century is often referred as Early Enlightenment, while the Enlightenment proper rather falls on the mid-second half of the eighteenth century). Nonetheless, it is impossible to overstress the important epistemological shift that affected many spheres of human life, including but not limited to production of knowledge, education, gender relations, state government, economic policies, to name a few. This shift had a profound implication on a religious sphere, too. Needless to say that thus viewed Enlightenment has never been a homogeneous and consistent phenomenon, it does not completely invalidate the concept itself, however.<sup>356</sup>

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<sup>356</sup> See, for example, classical work on the Enlightenment: Peter Gay, *The Enlightenment: An Interpretation*, 2 vols. (New York: Vintage, 1966-1969), or *The Enlightenment in National Contexts*, ed. by Roy Porter and Mikulas Teich (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981). More recent survey-like studies of the Enlightenment thought: Jonathan I. Israel, *Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity, 1650-1750* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2001); Idem., *Enlightenment Contested: Philosophy, Modernity, and the Emancipation of Man, 1670-1752* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2006) (Jonathan Israel’s work sparked lively debates, see more in: *H-France Forum*, no. 9 (2014)); *Encyclopedia of Enlightenment*, ed. by Alan C. Kors, 4 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); David Sorkin, *The Religious Enlightenment: Protestants, Jews, and the Catholics from London to Vienna* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), to name a few. The comprehensive review of the enormous historiography of the Enlightenment(s) see in: Dorinda Outram, *The Enlightenment*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013). The critical assessment of “the Enlightenment project” see, for example, in: Max Horkheimer, Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002); Reinhart Koselleck, *Critique and Crisis: Enlightenment and the Pathogenesis of Modern Society* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1988); Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason* (New York: Pantheon, 1965). See also the arguments against the Enlightenment’s failure to supplant providential thinking: Jonathan C. D. Clark, “Providence, Predestination and Progress: or, did the Enlightenment Fail?,” *Albion*, vol. 35, no. 4 (Winter 2003), 559-589). On the implementation of philosophical ideas in state government see: Leonard Krieger, *Kings and Philosophers, 1689-1789* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1970); *The Enlightenment in National Contexts*, ed. by Roy Porter and Mikuláš Teich (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981); Marc Raeff, *The Well-Ordered Police State: Social and Institutional Change through Law in the Germanies and Russia, 1600–1800* (New Haven: Yale University Press,



The concepts of “schism” and “schismatic” underwent a fundamental transformation at the dawn of the eighteenth century: they acquired a distinct legal sense. In other words, these concepts turned into categories of the newly issued secular law. Yet, it all happened not in place of but rather in parallel with the already deeply rooted tradition of religious stigmatization.

This transformation of the concepts of “schism” and “schismatic” had profound consequences: the state’s instruments of objectivation and social disciplining replaced the tools of ecclesiastic stigmatization. The abstract label “schismatic” applicable to a whole array of spiritual deviancy now acquired a set of specific and visible characteristics, while the multifaceted noun “schism” grew into a signifier for a clearly identified phenomenon of Russian church life, the “Schism.” The consequences of this transformation were not only the state’s increasing control over its subjects’ spiritual life, but also the subjects’ opportunity to negotiate their own place in the convoluted social fabric of Russian empire. Peter’s transformation also shaped the “Schism” as the discursive category known to us today.

### **Revealing the “Schism”**

On February 8, 1716, the Ruling Senate, Russia’s highest governing body, issued a decree which proclaimed that “all men and women of all ranks are to confess to their spiritual fathers annually,” under the threat of a severe fine. The provincial governors were put in charge of collecting the fines and enforcing the confessional discipline properly: parish priests all around the country had to report their parishioners who failed to fulfill their duty. The Senate added to this ruling one important element regarding “schismatics”:

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1983); *Enlightened Absolutism: Reform and Reformers in Later Eighteenth-Century Europe*, ed. by H.M. Scott (Hampshire and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1990), and many others.

Also, wherever schismatics may be, in all provinces, the governors must register them, both males and females...and having registered them, levy upon them a poll-tax of twice the currently established level of payment... The provinces are to inform the Senate's Chancellery on how many schismatics there are in each province and how much of tax is levied on them.<sup>357</sup>

This decree, as Aleksandr Lavrov argued, legalized the Old Belief and defined its social structure by including only prosperous poll-tax paying subjects.<sup>358</sup> I must add to this that this decree also had remarkable constructive consequences. It did not simply limit “the Schism” to poll-tax paying social strata, but defined what it *meant to be* a “schismatic” in civil law and vested this category with certain legal rights, responsibilities, and restraints. In other words, it is not just that Peter's government provided “Old Believers” with the legal status they did not have before, as Lavrov argues; it *created* the legal category of “the Schism” and defined it in religious as well as fiscal and political terms.

It is not accidental that the introduction of the double poll tax for “schismatics” on the imperial level occurred as a part of a decree that established the requirement of annual confession for all Orthodox subjects of the Russian tsar.<sup>359</sup> Both of these measures were a part of persistent large-scale state disciplinary efforts in all spheres of life, including religiosity. As the Synod clearly explained in 1721, the fines for non-partaking in the sacraments “were introduced to impel negligent people to fulfill their Christian duty and to stop disseminating the schismatics’ deception.”<sup>360</sup> In other words, by forcing Russians to attend the sacraments every year, Peter hoped, as Lavrov wittingly noted, “to teach [them] to do at least something ‘regularly.’”<sup>361</sup> The

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<sup>357</sup> PSZ, t. 5, no. 2991 (February 8, 1716), 179.

<sup>358</sup> Lavrov, *Koldovstvo i religiia v Rossii*, 60–63.

<sup>359</sup> PSZ, t. 5, no. 2991 (February 8, 1716), 179.

<sup>360</sup> *Opisanie dokumentov i del, khraniashchikhsia v arkhive Sviateishago Pravitel'stvuiushchago Sinoda* (hereafter - ODDSS), 30 vols. (St. Petersburg, 1868-1913), t. 2, ch. 1 (1722), no. 28/606 (January 9, 1722), 28.

<sup>361</sup> Lavrov, *Koldovstvo i religiia v Rossii*, 346. For more on the “reform of piety,” see in the same work, which, actually, introduced the notion of the “reform of piety” itself.

ideas of order and regularity were at the core of the so-called “reform of piety,” which Peter the Great initiated during his reign. It formed part of the tsar’s intention to reshape Russia into a “police”—i.e. “well-ordered”—state.<sup>362</sup>

The consequences of the decree for the concept of “schismatic” were far-reaching. First, it forced the legislators to clearly and explicitly define what constituted a manifestation of the “Schism,” because, as one of the laws stated in 1720, “many schismatics live secretly pretending to be pious, because they do not want to declare their Schism and to pay double poll-tax.”<sup>363</sup> Therefore, the “secret schismatics” needed to be “found, recognized, and exposed.”<sup>364</sup> To this end, legislators formulated a whole set of special “marks” of the “Schism.”

The 1716 decree indicated that the most important religious sign of a “schismatic” was the refusal to receive the sacraments in the official Church, particularly pointing to confession. Soon, further decrees stressed still more the sacrament of communion. “There is no better way to identify the schismatic [than refusal to partake in the Eucharist],” proclaimed *The Spiritual Regulation* (*Dukhovnyi reglament*, 1721), a state-issued set of rules for the clergy and parishioners alike.<sup>365</sup> In 1722, the Holy Synod, the Church’s highest governing body, commanded to set aside the rules of canon law that required depriving grave sinners of the Eucharist. The Synod reasoned that “schismatics falsely own up to obscene sins in order to get away from the holy Eucharist,” that is why any penitent, no matter what grave sin he or she confessed, should still receive the

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<sup>362</sup> On the disciplining of religiosity in the eighteenth-century Russia: Lavrov, *Koldovstvo i religiia v Rossii*. On the idea of social disciplining and the creation of the police state in Russia see: Raeff, *The Well-Ordered Police State*.

<sup>363</sup> *PSZ*, t. 6, no. 3547 (March 14, 1720), 169.

<sup>364</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 3925 (April 3, 1722), 520.

<sup>365</sup> *PSZ*, t. 6, no. 3718 (January 25, 1721), 341.

sacrament.<sup>366</sup> Apparently, the discovery of “schismatics” took precedence over some of the Church rules.

Another significant mark of the “Schism” consisted of making the sign of the cross with two fingers instead of three, as Patriarch Nikon instituted back in the 1650s. If a person attended church services punctiliously and participated in the sacraments, the refusal to give up the pre-Nikonian sign of the cross would still be a clear indication of the “Schism.” The Synod’s regulation from 1722 instructed that even if an Orthodox believer performed the sign of the cross with two fingers out of “ignorance” only, but did it “out of stubbornness,” he or she should still be registered as a “schismatic” “no matter what.”<sup>367</sup> In this case, disobedience to the rulings from the church hierarchy was more important than acceptance of the Church itself and its teachings.

Finally, for the purpose of exposing “schismatics” the Synod also introduced in November, 1721, a special type of oath obligatory for all subjects in state service. In addition to the pledge of loyalty to the monarch, the oath included the condemnation of all “schismatic concords.”<sup>368</sup> At the same time, in April, 1722, Tsar Peter announced a special, old-fashioned and clearly discernable type of public dress intended specifically for the registered “schismatics”: females were to wear old-fashioned hats and coats, while males had to don a homespun coat with a distinct red stand-up collar.<sup>369</sup>

Thus, the “Schism” as a legal category did not refer to a certain type of belief but rather to a system of visible practices. It aimed to disclose “secret schismatics,” rather than to give a detailed account of their confessional affiliation. Even more important, as a result of the 1716 Senate ruling

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<sup>366</sup> *Polnoe sobranie postanovlenii i rasporiashenii po vedomstvu pravolsavnago ispovedaniia Rossiiskoi imperii* (hereafter – *PSPR*), 15 vols. (St. Petersburg: v Sinodal’noi tipografii, 1869-1915), t. 2 (1722), no. 454 (February 28, 1722), 107; *PSZ*, t. 6, no. 4009 (May 15, 1722), 679.

<sup>367</sup> *PSPR*, t. 2 (1722), no. 454 (February 28, 1722), 107; *PSZ*, t. 6, no. 4009 (May 15, 1722), 679.

<sup>368</sup> *PSPR*, t. 2 (1722), no. 877 (October 29, 1722), 569-570; *PSZ*, t. 6, no. 3846 (November 10, 1721), 452.

<sup>369</sup> *PSZ*, t. 6, no. 3945 (April 6, 1722); *PSPR*, t. 2 (1722), no. 844 (October 5, 1722), 539-540.

about the double tax, the category of “schismatic” automatically included everybody who did not practice Orthodoxy in the officially defined way, that is to say, did not fit the tsar’s image of “good order.” Due to such a broad definition of what it meant to be a “schismatic,” it often became practically impossible to distinguish “schismatics” proper from “sectarians” of different sorts in the official documents from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

### **“Schismatics” Against the Tsar**

In addition to ideas of religious discipline, Petrine legislation added one more qualitatively new meaning to the concept of “schismatic”—a meaning that in many ways determined the eighteenth-century debates on “anti-schismatic” policies: specifically, the idea of *political* subversion. Thus, *The Spiritual Regulation* that banned the appointment of “schismatics” to any position of authority grounded this rule in the idea that they were “mortal enemies who are constantly thinking ill of the state and the sovereign.”<sup>370</sup> The champion of the harshest anti-“schismatic” policies, the Bishop Pitirim of Nizhnii Novgorod, expressed the same idea in his letter to Peter I in a following way: “All of them, wherever they are, never express joy about the state’s welfare, instead they are joyful about [its] misfortunes. They are always trying to lift up their evil horn against the Church and the state.”<sup>371</sup> The registered “schismatics,” therefore, were officially prohibited from holding any governmental or municipal offices and even deprived of the right to testify in court.<sup>372</sup>

Of course, even in the seventeenth century civil authorities persecuted “schismatics,” “mutineers,” “false teachers,” and other offenders of ecclesiastical power in the tsar’s name. The

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<sup>370</sup> PSZ, t. 6, no. 3718 (January 25, 1721), 342.

<sup>371</sup> “Pervoe predlozhenie Pitirima” (1720s), in P.V. Verkhovskoi, *Uchrezhdenie Dukhovnoi kollegii i Dukhovnyi reglament*, t. 2 (Rostov-na-Donu: n.p., 1916), 116–17.

<sup>372</sup> PSZ, t. 7, no. 4526 (June 4, 1724), 300; PSPR, t. 2 (1722), 107.

Russian tsar was indeed seen as responsible for the wellbeing of the Church. Nevertheless, the idea that “schismatics” represented a direct threat to a sovereign and therefore should be neutralized was definitely new.

It is very important to stress here that the category of “schismatic” as it appeared in eighteenth-century Russian civil law in no way should be equated with the notion of “Old Belief” (or “*staroobriadchestvo*”) employed in modern historical studies. The Petrine state did not intend to understand the term “schismatics” as what people really believed or why they believed it, nor did it mean to protect them legally. The category of “schismatic” was an instrument (effective or not is a different question) for the eradication of a perceived political threat, which also appeared to be a religious and social deviation.

### **Ignorance and Enlightenment**

The transformation of the concepts of “schism” into the “Schism” was a continuation of earlier polemical tradition rather than a break with it. Throughout the second half of the seventeenth century, Russian learned elite actively embraced the ideals of the religious Enlightenment towards the church dissenters. In particular, they voiced notions of “superstition” (*sueverie*) and “ignorance” (*nevezhstvo*) extensively in polemical tracts, identifying disobedience to ecclesiastical authorities and attachment to the old books and rituals, such as the use of two fingers in the sign of the cross as clear outcomes of the lack of both proper education and reasonableness among the dissenters.<sup>373</sup> Since the beginning of the eighteenth century this trope

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<sup>373</sup> David Sorkin proposes to use the terms reasonable and reasonableness instead of rational and rationality in order to better comprehend the religious Enlightenment, which was an essentially reconciliatory part of the larger Enlightenment “spectrum” (another Sorkin’s coinage). Sorkin writes: “Reasonable should be distinguished from *rational*, the term scholars commonly employ to assert the Enlightenment’s primary if not exclusive reliance on reason. We should follow contemporaries by thinking of reasonable in relationship with unreasonable. To religious enlighteners, unreasonable meant an exclusive embrace of either reason or faith. Faith untampered by knowledge, or combined with excessively partisan forms, produced intolerant, dogmatic, or enthusiastic religion... At the same time,

became one of the most common in both ecclesiastical and secular discourses about the “Schism.”<sup>374</sup>

For instance, a clear distinction between malicious “schismatic teachers” and ignorant “simple people” appeared already in the second half of the seventeenth century in the works of Simeon Polotskii, yet it developed fully in the next century. Ecclesiastical documents asserted that both “teachers” and “simple people” are “ignoramuses,” the only difference between them is that “teachers” are “malicious ignoramuses,” while “simple people” are “non-malicious ignoramuses.”<sup>375</sup> The most influential theologian and church hierarch of the first third of the eighteenth century, Feofan Prokopovich (1681-1736), portrayed the “Schism” as nothing more than a deceptive scheme: the “teachers of Schism,” he claimed, are in fact “clear atheists” who deceive unknowledgeable “simple people out of interest for their own bellies.”<sup>376</sup>

The unreasonable character of the “schismatics” convictions also revealed itself, according to the official church polemicists, in the practice of self-immolation and the claim of adherence to the “old belief.” In his 1723 exhortation the archbishop Feofilakt (Lopatinskii), one of the chief churchmen of the Petrine era, asserted that the “schismatics” falsely perceived the rightful prosecution against them as “persecution” (*kazni*) and “unjust suffering” (*nepravedno terpim*). Yet, instead of “loving conversation [with the church authorities] in a frank and safe manner” (*liubovnyi i bezopasnyi chestnyi razgovor*), the “schismatics” hid themselves and even

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religious enlighteners thought that unaided reason engendered immoral skepticism and unbelief.” (Sorkin, *The Religious Enlightenment*, 12).

<sup>374</sup> E.B. Smilianskaia, “‘Sueverie’ i ratsionalizm vlastei i poddannyykh v Rossii XVIII v.,” in *Evropeiskoe Prosveshchenie i tsivilizatsiia Rossii* (Moscow: Nauka, 2004), 204-211; O.A. Tsapina, “‘Smekha dostoinie pozorishche’? Diskussiia o veroterpimosti i obraz staroobriadtsa v Rossii epokhi Prosveshcheniia,” in *O vere i sueveriiakh: sbornik statei v chest’ E.B. Smilianskoi*, ed. by V.E. Borisov (Moscow: Indrik, 2014), 207-256.

<sup>375</sup> *PSPR*, t. 2 (1722), no. 385 (January 27, 1722), 40-41 (*PSZ*, t. 6, no. 3891 (January 27, 1722), 493-494); *PSZ*, t. 6 no. 3925 (April 3, 1722), 520.

<sup>376</sup> Feofan Prokopovich, *Istinnoe opravdanie pravovernykh khristian, kreshcheniem polivatel’nym vo Khrista kreshchaemykh* (Moscow: Sinodal’naia tipografiia, 1724), 5.

took their own lives:

...they call themselves Old Believers [falsely]. In fact, they are superstitionists (*suevertsy*), ungrateful to God, who gave them their being, life, and breath..., these antagonists and haters of the humankind ignore the fear of God and neglect His natural and civil law when committing self-immolations and leading many other simple people to self-immolations.<sup>377</sup>

The insistent invitation for “loving conversation” and the appeal to God-given natural and civil law was not effective in combating self-immolations, though. The number of suicide cases decreased only close to the end of the eighteenth century when the state legally and pragmatically reduced the prosecution of the “Schism.”

### **The Mirror Image of the Orthodoxy**

Since the period of Peter’s rule, secular and ecclesiastical discourses portrayed the “Schism” as an inverted version of the official Orthodox Church. Laws and decrees frequently used the words “schismatic shepherds” (*pastyri raskolnicheskie*),<sup>378</sup> “monks and nuns” (in several variants: “*monakhi i monakhini*”, “*startsy*” and “*staritsy*”, “*chernitsy i chernitsy*”) and “priests” (*popy*) with the specifying word “schismatic.”<sup>379</sup> Such usage stressed that the “Schism” was a form of Russian Orthodoxy, but corrupted and illegal one. The same logic worked with the sacraments: for instance, a baptism performed by lay person was talked about as a Christian sacrament but wrongly performed and thus invalid.<sup>380</sup>

In accordance with its name, the “Schism” was generally treated as a condition of erosion,

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<sup>377</sup> *PSPR*, t. 4 (1724-1725), no. 1436 (December 14, 1724), 297 (*PSZ*, t. 7, no. 4635 (January 15, 1725), 405)

<sup>378</sup> *PSZ*, t. 6, no. 3718 (January 25, 1721), 342.

<sup>379</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 3522 (February 13, 1720), 132-134; *Ibid.*, no. 4153 (January 30, 1723), 18; *PSPR*, t. 2 (1722), no. 454 (February 28, 1722), 107; *Ibid.*, no. 721 (July 16, 1722), 410.

<sup>380</sup> *PSPR*, t. 2 (1722), no. 454 (February 28, 1722), 107 *Ibid.*, no. 721 (July 16, 1722), 410.



deviance; therefore, the phrases “seduced into the Schism” or “returning from the Schism.” After the introduction of the double poll-tax, it was the only legitimate way for a person born Orthodox to withdraw from the official Church. Otherwise, any apostasy and proselytizing was considered a criminal offence punished by death.<sup>381</sup>

Archimandrite Pitirim, the famous combatant against the “Schism” and the bishop of Nizhnii Novgorod, described the exceptional position of the “schismatics” in Russian society succinctly: “Christ said the enemies of a man are those of his household, and these enemies are truly worse than strangers.”<sup>382</sup> These words were translated into a policy of real persecution. One significant example of this attitude can be found in the exclusion of “schismatics” from a “general amnesty” for all criminals and debtors, issued by Peter the Great in a celebration of victory in the Great Northern War in 1721. According to the Senate’s interpretation of the decree, only three categories of criminals were excluded from the “tsar’s mercy”: murderers, “serious criminals,” and “schismatics.” The latter could only be “forgiven” under the condition of repentance and unconditional “return” to the official Church’s flock.<sup>383</sup>

In a word, in the state and church discourses the “Schism” was equivalent to a wrong way of practicing Orthodoxy, rather than to a confession separate from the Russian Orthodox Church, as the term “Old Belief” might suggest.

### **Tax for the “Schism”**

The tax for the “Schism” instituted in 1716 existed for more than six decades until it was

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<sup>381</sup> *PSZ*, t. 1, no. 1 (January 29, 1649), 156.

<sup>382</sup> “Pervoe predlozhenie Pitirima” (1720s), in Verkhovskoi, *Uchrezhdenie Dukhovnoi kollegii*, 117.

<sup>383</sup> *PSZ*, t. 6, no. 3842 (November 4, 1721), 450.

abolished abruptly in 1782. Announced as a stand-alone measure, later on the “schismatic” registration campaigns became an indispensable part of the periodic population censuses (1<sup>st</sup> - 1719, 2<sup>nd</sup> - 1744-1745, 3<sup>rd</sup> - 1763, 4<sup>th</sup> - 1782) that surveyed the imperial tax base. It is a commonly held view in Russian historiography that the introduction of the double poll-tax on “schismatics” was solely a financial measure driven by the expenses of the prolonged Great Northern War (1700-1721). I propose that initially the double poll-tax for “schismatics” was designed as a way to eradicate the “Schism” rather than to enrich the state treasury.

The 1716 decree on the collection of the tax itself offered no elaboration, except that the “schismatics” should be put on the record and levied with the double tax.<sup>384</sup> However, the intention behind it was clearly disciplinary. One year later Tsar Peter specified in a succinct order to Iurii Rzhevskii, the head of military expedition against Nizhnii Novgorod dissenters, that if the “schismatics” would return to the official Church, the double poll-tax should be removed, “so that others who would see it would return [to the official Church], too.”<sup>385</sup> Hence, Tsar Peter intended the measure to serve as an example to the “schismatics,” impelling them to come back to the Church’s flock. In other words, double taxation was supposed to be a punishment for the deviation from the official “path to salvation,” on one hand, and a deterrent for those who had not yet decided whether to join the “Schism,” on the other.

The way the “schismatic” money was administered also attests to the punitive-didactic essence of the double poll-tax. Unlike in any other cases of tax evasion, the state was surprisingly forgiving towards the repentant “schismatics”: whoever avoided paying the double tax and was subsequently discovered, was then obliged to pay all the back taxes, unless he or she returned to

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<sup>384</sup> *Ibid.*, t. 5, no. 2991 (February 8, 1716), 179.

<sup>385</sup> *Ibid.*, t. 5, no. 3340 (March 24, 1719), 687.

the official Church. In this case, all of the debt was written off.<sup>386</sup> Even more importantly, the money collected from the “schismatics” was spent solely on the fight against the “Schism” itself. For instance, the Chancellery of Ecclesiastical Affairs (*Prikaz tserkovnykh del*), one of several units overseeing “schismatic” affairs, operated on this money.<sup>387</sup> Missionaries, such as the famous monk Neofit who was sent to Pomor’e region for the disputation with the Vyg community dissenters, were also paid from the money collected from the “schismatics.”<sup>388</sup>

Years after the introduction of the double poll-tax, finally in July, 1722, the Senate and Synod formulated jointly the meaning of the tax on “schismatics” in a straightforward manner:

The double poll-tax has been levied upon schismatics and they had registered in it, however, it has not been done so that they could sow the schismatic deception and instruct others in it; the double poll-tax has been levied on them for their stubborn unwillingness to convert to the Holy Church and to be the part of the Orthodox flock.<sup>389</sup>

That is, the collection of the special tax legalized the position of “schismatics,” but at the same time it stressed the perverse, felonious status of the “Schism” itself. In other words, the double poll-tax was a temporary measure implemented for “enlightening” stubborn, superstitious people, not to accommodate them in a new legal framework.<sup>390</sup> This phenomenon is similar to the situation of patience towards religious minorities in Early Modern England, which Alexandra Wallsham conveyed with a pithy oxymoron “charitable hatred.” An unapologetic persecution of all sorts of the dissenters was accepted in medieval and early modern Europe alike as “a form of charity

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<sup>386</sup> *PSPR*, t. 2 (1722), no. 454 (February 28, 1722), 107.

<sup>387</sup> See, for example: *Ibid.*, t. 1 (1721), no. 236 (September 25, 1721), 286-287; *Ibid.*, t. 2 (1722), no. 407 (February 16, 1722), 58.

<sup>388</sup> *Ibid.*, t. 2 (1722), no. 560 (April 23, 1722), 208-209. About collected money: *ODDSS*, t. 1, no. 123/260, 97 (Rzhevskii collected 19.715 rubles from 37.771 “schismatics” for 1718-1719 years).

<sup>389</sup> *PSPR*, t. 2 (1722), no. 721 (July 16, 1722), 410; *PSZ*, t. 4, no. 4052 (July 16, 1722), 742.

<sup>390</sup> See Viktor Zhivov’s observations on the didactic nature of Russian imperial law in general: V. M. Zhivov, “Istoriia russkogo prava kak lingvosemioticheskaia problema” in *Idem.*, *Razyskaniia v oblasti istorii*, 271-273.

towards the sinner that was inextricable from a fervent hatred of the sin that endangered his or her salvation.” “In a context in which truth was held to be single and indivisible, the persecution of dissident minorities was logical, rational and legitimate,” Walsham concludes.<sup>391</sup>

The act of the acknowledgement of the “Schism” as an unwelcome, yet permissible semi-confessional affiliation had an unintended constructive force, nonetheless: the legalization of the “Schism” in the reign of Peter I led to the creation of a pseudo-social category under the “schismatic” name. Originally, when the tsar introduced the double tax in 1716, he obviously expected to buy the religious obedience of his subjects; as discussed above, the severity of the penalty implied that the dissenters would conform to avoid paying a fine.<sup>392</sup> Peter’s successors were also certain that money played a very big role in the way the so-called “schismatics” determined their religious affiliation. It was commonly believed that if persons who converted from the “Schism” paid lower taxes, they would develop a “stronger desire” to come back to the official Church.<sup>393</sup>

However, if in the beginning the authorities tried to attract the “schismatics” to the “Orthodox” side by less severe taxation, by the end of the 1730s such policies led to unexpected results. According to many officials, the special tax status of “schismatics” attracted people because by paying the double poll-tax, they were excluded from some other state imposts in money and in kind.<sup>394</sup> This situation developed in part because of the abundance of the “anti-Schism” legislation, and in part because of its non-systematic character. Some specific cases became generalized, and their decisions coexisted with contradictory general norms. Army recruitment is

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<sup>391</sup> Alexandra Walsham, *Charitable Hatred: Tolerance and Intolerance in England, 1500-1700* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2006), 1-2.

<sup>392</sup> See, for example: *PSZ*, t. 5, no. 3340 (March 24, 1719), 687.

<sup>393</sup> *Ibid.*, t. 7, no. 4985 (December 12, 1726), 715; *Ibid.*, t. 9, no. 6802 (September 4, 1735), 574.

<sup>394</sup> *Ibid.*, t. 10, no. 7702 (December 11, 1738), 666; *Ibid.*, t. 13, no. 9620 (May 25, 1749), 66.

a classic example: the Old Believers from the Vyg settlement officially registered as “schismatics” and were freed from military service as a result of a special dispensation. Then some officials perceived this decision as standard practice for all “schismatics.”<sup>395</sup>

In other words, the imposition of a special taxation on legally defined religious dissent led to the unintended creation of a sort of a social status designated for the dissenters. This situation became possible because of the complexity of Russian social order.

### **The “Schism” and Social Stratification in the Russian Empire**

The social structure of Russian Empire formed historically in an extremely convoluted entity: in addition to various strata of privileged and non-privileged groups based on service, occupation, land-holding, lineage, duties, etc., over the centuries the persistently expanding Muscovite state incorporated religiously and ethnically defined groups. At the beginning of the eighteenth century Peter I attempted to introduce a strict order into the social tapestry by dividing it into two large parts: poll-tax payers (peasants, merchants and townspeople) and privileged (noblemen and clergy). Apart from the differentiated monetary obligations, the taxpayers were responsible for various levies and obligations, including conscription for military service. Not less important, unlike the privileged groups, the taxpayers were also liable to corporal punishment and were seriously limited in geographical mobility by the passport system. Notwithstanding Peter I’s reformist efforts, a diverse variety of social categories continued to exist inside of both privileged and unprivileged groups right until the end of the Romanov Empire in 1917. The status of these

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<sup>395</sup> *Ibid.*, t. 8, no. 5630 (October 16, 1730), 330; *Ibid.*, t. 10, no. 7702 (December 11, 1738), 666-667; *Ibid.*, t. 11, no. 8175 (July 15, 1740), 190-192. Non-privileged Russian subjects perceived military service as an extremely traumatic experience; thus, it is no surprise that the exclusion of some particular “schismatics” from it led to a view of this category as privileged. On the perception of military service in pre-Revolutionary Russia see, for example, Elise Kimerling Wirtschafter, *From Serf to Russian Soldier* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), esp. 4-9.

groups rested upon hereditary standing, ethnicity, religious affiliation, bondage or association with specific institutions, etc.<sup>396</sup>

The 1757 decree that declared conscription into the Russian army fighting in the Seven Years' War vividly illustrates the intricacy of the imperial social classification. The decree stated that the whole taxpayer population should give one recruit from every 194 "souls" (i.e. male poll-tax payers), specifically listing merchants, numerous categories of peasants (royal court owned (*dvortsovye*), tribute-paying (*iasachnye*), black-plow or state owned (*chernosochnye*), Synodal (*sinodal'nye*), eparchial (*arkhiereiskie*), monastery and manorial (*pomeshchich'i*)), peoples of foreign faiths (*inovertsy*), coachmen (*iamshchiki*), and masters and skilled workers possessed by the state and private factories (*masterovye i rabotnye liudi*). For different reasons, the conscription orders excluded some other categories of taxpayers, such as single homesteaders (*odnodvortsy*) and "servicemen of old service" (*starykh sluzheb sluzhilye liudi*), as well as those assigned to the Admiralty for shipbuilding, the newly baptized (*novokreshcheny*) Tatars assigned to the upkeep of the postal service, and others.<sup>397</sup>

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<sup>396</sup> For decades the social structure of the Russian Empire remained a focus of scholarly interest and lively debate. The category of *soslovie*, translated roughly as "estate," received special attention in the works of domestic and foreign historians. Due to the multiple contexts of its use in history and historiography the term *soslovie* is problematic for use as a heuristic category: it demonstrates the complexity and seeming inconsistency of Russian Imperial social order rather than offering an explanation of it (Gregory Freeze, "The *Soslovie* (Estate) Paradigm and Russian Social History," *American Historical Review*, vol. 91, no. 1 (Feb., 1986), 11-36, esp. 14-25; Michael Confino, "The *Soslovie* (Estate) Paradigm: Reflections on Some Open Questions," *Cahiers du Monde Russe*, vol. 49, no. 4 (October-December 2008), 681- 699; Elise K. Wirtschafter, "Social Categories in Russian Imperial History," *Cahiers du Monde Russe*, vol. 50, no. 1 (January-March 2009), 231-250). For general works on the social organization of Russian Empire see: Elise Kimerling Wirtschafter, *Structures of Society: Imperial Russia's "People of Various Ranks"* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1994); Idem., *Social Identity in Imperial Russia, 1700-1917*, vol. 1 (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2000), esp. 246-256. The analysis of the projects of the new law code from 1754-1766 directly concerned questions of social stratification of the empire, see in: S.V. Pol'skoi, "'Na raznye chiny razdeliaia svoi narod...'" Zakonodatel'noe zakreplenie soslovnogo statusa russkogo dvorianstva v seredine XVIII veka," *Cahiers du Monde Russe*, vol. 51, no. 2-3 (April-September 2010), 303-328.

<sup>397</sup> *PSZ*, t. 14, no. 10785 (December 23, 1757), 832.

Unintentionally constructed by the state itself, the category of “schismatics” obtained its own place in this almost Borgesian variety.<sup>398</sup> In *The General Instruction* (*General’noe uchrezhdenie*) on the organization of the recruitment, issued in September, 1766, the “schismatics” were enlisted among numerous other categories of nonprivileged Russians. The long list of the poll-tax payers who were obligated to supply the state with recruits specified that it also included “coachmen, registered and non-registered *schismatics* of all ranks, hermits residing in forests and hermitages, Russians and those of foreign faiths (*inovertsy*) bonded to the Admiralty,” etc.<sup>399</sup> Apparently, the legislators simply tried to clarify that the “schismatics,” no matter whether secret or known to the authorities, were by no means excluded from the recruitment. However, in making this remark, they acknowledged the existence of a *de facto* social category in the seeming purely ecclesiastical deviation of the “Schism.”

## Conclusion

In conclusion, through the whole second half of the seventeenth century the state punished the people vaguely defined by an ecclesiastical category of “schismatics” for their disobedience to the authorities, church and civil alike, rather than for a crime called “schism.” Only in the beginning of the eighteenth century did “schismatic” become a category of secular law as a crime against the state imposed order. The “schismatics” did not fit into Peter I’s notion of “regular”

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<sup>398</sup> Jorge Louis Borges introduced a taxonomy of animals reportedly borrowed from a fictional Chinese encyclopedia. The list included the creatures classified in ill-matched categories, such as the ones that belong to the emperor, fabulous ones, those that tremble as if they were mad, stray dogs, etc. (Jorge Louis Borges, “John Wilkins’ Analytical Language,” in Idem., *Selected Non-Fictions*, ed. by Eliot Weinberger (New York: Viking, 1999), 231). Michel Foucault recognized this Borgesian taxonomy as an inspiration for his celebrated work *The Order of Things* (Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things. An Archeology of the Human Sciences* (London and New York: Routledge, 1989), xvi).

<sup>399</sup> *PSZ*, t. 17, no. 12748 (September 29, 1766), 997. See also the decree from December 11, 1738, that juxtaposed the “schismatics” with merchants (*kupechestvo*) and peasants (*krest’iane*). *Ibid.*, t. 10, no. 7702 (December 11, 1738), 666-667.

piety and, as a consequence, into his view of subjects' loyalty to their sovereign. Thus, striving to discipline the society and punish the offenders, the state objectified the "schismatics," i.e. filled the term with the set of unique and specific characteristics and signs. The consequences of Peter I's policies for the discourse about the "Schism" proved to be long-lasting. The *de facto* introduction of the quasi-social category of "schismatic" was one of the enduring effects.

Yet, arguably the most important feature of the period is that a "schism(s)" debated in the late seventeenth-century polemical works turned into *the* "Schism," so familiar to the students of Russian history. The disparity between the two is astounding: the former one signified a generally defined discord inside the Church, while the latter implied an entity specific in time and place, consisting of false beliefs and practices, as well as people attached to them.

Symptomatically, the abovementioned transformation paralleled the formation of the "Old Believer" (*starovery*, *drevlepravoslavnye*, etc.) communities with their distinct identities and historical traditions.<sup>400</sup> The accuracy with which these traditions and identities mirrored in the notion of the "Schism" the ecclesiastical polemics and state legal discourse constructed is a matter of additional investigation; what is important to stress here, though, is the fact that the two were by no means equivalent to each other.

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<sup>400</sup> Michels, "The First Old Believers in Tradition and Historical Reality," 481-508.



## CHAPTER II. The “Schism,” Taxes, and Peasant Protests in Viatka

On September 1, 1764 Simon Fefilatov, a peasant from Viatka province, filed an unanticipated petition to the provincial civil authorities on behalf of 690 peasants of Viatka’s southern districts. In the petition Fefilatov asked that authorities regard him and his fellows as “secret schismatics” (*potaennye raskol’niki*). The petitioners admitted that they were truly “schismatics” despite the fact that “they have been always attending the church and accepted confession from the [official] priests, and performed the sign of the cross with three fingers” just like every other official Orthodox believer would. They had not disclosed themselves earlier in order “to cover up the Schism,” which “some of them learned by themselves and others thanks to their own fathers and other relatives during their grain trade and other business trips” to neighboring and far-away provinces.<sup>401</sup> Through the act of petitioning, the Viatka peasants obeyed the 1764 government manifesto that proclaimed regularly held obligatory registration for all Russian “schismatics” who had left the Russian Church but not yet revealed their dissidence to the state.

One of the people registered as a “schismatics” was a peasant from Oshetskaia estate named Tit Nokhrin. He was an opponent of Patriarch Nikon’s “innovations” and a dedicated champion of the “old faith.” In January 1769, while under examination in the Viatka ecclesiastical consistory, Nokhrin stated that he was 37 years old, and that his father was official Orthodox and had been buried near the Spasskaia church in Oshetskaia village by the parish priest. Tit Nokhrin was baptized and married in the in the official Orthodox church. However, sometimes in the late 1750s, while he was working at a copper-smelting factory in nearby Kungur province, he became

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<sup>401</sup> *Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Kirovskoi oblasti* (hereafter - *GAKO*), f. 237 (Viatka ecclesiastical consistory), op. 2, d. 21, ll. 33-33 ob. See also: I.F. Farmakovskii, “O pervonachal’nom poiavlenii raskola v Viatskoi eparkhii”, *Viatskie eparkhial’nye vedomosti* (hereafter - *VEV*), no. 5 (1868), 77-78.

acquainted with the factory scribe Ivan Mediakov, a “schismatic since olden days.” At Mediakov’s house Tit Nokhrin encountered old printed books – a collection of didactic ecclesiastical texts called *The Book of Psalms (Psaltyr’)* and a certain *Collection (Sobornik)*. In these books, he read that the sign of the cross should be made with two fingers and the church ceremonies should not be changed: the liturgy should be performed on seven hosts and the marriage procession should follow the clockwise direction. After that Nokhrin bought in Kazan his own books – an old printed church calendar (*Sviatsy*), as well as a handwritten collection of didactic ecclesiastical texts known as *Prologue/Synaxarion (Prolog)* and a collection of hymns and prayers titled the *Book of Canons (Kannonik)*. He “read [these books] at home and made the sign of the cross with two fingers” and also “inclined” his wife and daughters to do the same.<sup>402</sup>

The Oshetskaia estate peasant Tit Nokhrin is a classic example of what is called an “Old Believer.” In principle, the aspiration of some of the Viatka peasants like him to become “schismatics” expressed in 1764 petition should not have surprised imperial and clerical authorities. Therefore, the Fefilatov’s petition could be viewed as an act of compliance with the state order concerning “schismatics.” The Viatka peasants’ desire to profess their own dissident belief concurred, at least on the surface, with the state’s ambiguous confessional policies towards this unwelcome yet tolerated group. The Viatka ecclesiastical as well as civil authorities were not pleased with the appearance of religious dissent in their territory, yet after a long process of interrogations, exhortations, and record checking, hundreds of local peasants were registered as “schismatics.”<sup>403</sup>

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<sup>402</sup> *GAKO*, f. 237, op. 74, d. 387, ll. 29-30 ob.

<sup>403</sup> At the end of the nineteenth century authorities recorded the presence of more than 85,000 Old Believers in Viatka province (*guberniia*), which constituted around 3% of its almost three million population. *Kalendar’ Viatskoi gubernii na 1891 god* (Viatka: Gubernskaia tipografiia, 1890), 21.

A closer reading of the numerous sources related to the conversion of Viatka peasants to the “Schism” reveals more than a purely confessional explanation. The category of “schismatic” as it developed in the legal discourse since the beginning of the eighteenth century signified a complex socio-confessional status. Therefore, the registration among the “schismatics” had important social and financial implications in addition to the change in religious affiliation. Simon Fefilatov and his fellow peasants were well aware of this fact.

Yet, there is one more layer in this case, that is of the performative power of language. By claiming to be “schismatics,” rather powerless Viatka peasant communities were able to trigger the state machinery in the attempt to change their social status. In other words, peasants used the language of “Schism,” in which ecclesiastical and legal meanings interplayed, to bargain about their status in the convoluted social fabric of Russian Empire. Even though ultimately their attempt was not successful, it clearly demonstrates that language not only communicated information, in this case from the state officials to the subjects and vice versa, but was a mighty tool of forming and performing the social world.

### **The Registration of 1765**

On March 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1764, the Russian government’s manifesto officially announced that all of the “schismatics” who had not yet been enlisted as such in the government record should reveal themselves to the authorities and register for payment of the “schismatic” poll tax. The manifesto marked January 1<sup>st</sup>, 1765, as a deadline for the registration; however, later it was postponed for another 3 months, until April, 1765.<sup>404</sup> The decree mandated a harsh punishment for anyone who did not abide by the law and concealed his or her “schismatic” adherence. It added, however, that

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<sup>404</sup> PSZ, t. 16 (1762-1764), no. 12067 (March 3, 1764), 596-597; *Ibid.*, t. 17 (1765-1766), no. 12315 (January 19, 1765), 12.

the people whose “Schism” was limited to “some inveterate and imprudent superstitious customs,” such as the two-fingered sign of the cross, should neither be regarded as “schismatics” nor pay the double tax, since they did not reject the church and its doctrine.<sup>405</sup>

In accordance with the manifesto, in September, 1764, the “peasants’ delegate” (*vybornyi iz krest’ian*) Simon Fefilatov submitted a petition (*donoshenie*) to the Viatka provincial office. He represented 690 peasants and their family members from the Sunskaia, Oshetskaia, Kyrchanskaia, Kurchumskaia and Kumenskaia estates (*votchiny*) of Khlynovskii district (*uezd*).<sup>406</sup> The latter was a part of Viatskaia province (*provintsiia*) subordinated to a head of even larger administrative entity – the general-governor of Kazanskaia *guberniia*.<sup>407</sup> The Viatka bishopric mostly coincided with the administrative borders of the province.

Fefilatov’s petition specified what the so-called “Schism” represented for those peasants: they “make the sign of the cross with two fingers, do not visit Orthodox priests and do not accept church sacraments, because in the past the God’s liturgy was performed on seven communion breads, baptism of children and the Great Entrance (*velikii vkhod*) were performed by the sun [clockwise], but now the liturgy is performed only on five communion breads and baptizing and the [Great] Entrance not by the sun [counter-clockwise], so they consider all of that contrary to the Old Belief (*staraia vera*).”<sup>408</sup> In this way, the Viatka peasants voiced as evidence of their adherence

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<sup>405</sup> *Ibid.*, t. 16 (1762-1764), no. 12067 (March 3, 1764), 596-597.

<sup>406</sup> *GAKO*, f. 237, op. 2, d. 21, l. 33.

<sup>407</sup> It should be noted that in the same years of the third census “schismatics” were also registered in the territory of Kazanskii *uezd* of the province of the same name. There were at least 23 “schismatics” in the district of Arskaia *doroga* (*GAKO*, f. 583 (Viatka provincial office), op. 6, d. 1127, l. 3). In 1765 the Kazan provincial office even allowed local “schismatics” to organize a cemetery on the state lands near the village Nikol’skoe (most likely refers to a village Nikol’skoe Loban’) (*GAKO*, f. 583, op. 11, d. 755, l. 2). Another cemetery opened in the same year in the territory of Kazanskii *uezd* in the district of Alatskaia *doroga*, in the village Bol’shaia (*GAKO*, f. 583, op. 17, d. 1218, l. 7 ob.). The so-called “schismatics” in this village were most likely of Old Believers of priestly division (*GAKO*, f. 237, op. 74, d. 231, l. 6 ob.). In any case, for the investigation of the phenomenon of “schismatic” registration in Viatka in 1765 the existence of Old Believers in the bordering territories is not crucial.

<sup>408</sup> *GAKO*, f. 237, op. 2, d. 21, l. 33-33 ob.

to the “Schism” its best-known ritual divergences from official Orthodoxy: the rejection of Patriarch Nikon’s changes manifested in crossing themselves with two fingers, and not accepting official priests and sacraments performed by them.

Notwithstanding the legality of the petitioners’ request, both ecclesiastical and civil provincial authorities expressed clear displeasure with the appearance of the “Schism” within their jurisdictions. There was no official record of “schismatic” presence either in the register of the Viatka provincial office, or in the documents of the local ecclesiastical consistory (*Viatskaia dukhovnaia konsistoriia*), including the confessional registries. In addition, no disturbing reports from local priests about the rise of the “Schism” in their parishes ever reached church authorities in Khlynov, the capital of the province. It was no surprise, therefore, that the church and state bureaucrats agreed on the fact that “there have never been [schismatics] in Viatka province.”<sup>409</sup>

The provincial office dragged out the registration of the petitioners in the “schismatic” status for months. It interpreted the petition in accordance with contemporary civil discourse about the “Schism” as nothing more but the sign of the applicants’ ignorance and “imprudent stubbornness” (*bezrassudnoe upriamstvo*). It also asserted, using bureaucratic parlance, that it “could not pronounce [petitioners] to be true schismatics... and therefore cannot register them in the double poll tax since they themselves do not subvert the Church rules... and only know about the Schism by hearsay.” “Only if they [the petitioners] withdraw from the Holy Church and its sacraments,” should the provincial office satisfy the petition and register them as double poll-tax payers.<sup>410</sup> It was the responsibility of the local church authorities’ to determine if the petitioners were, in fact, “true schismatics.”

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<sup>409</sup> *Ibid.*, l. 33ob. See also: *Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv drevnikh aktov* (hereafter - *RGADA*), f. 425 (Viatka provincial office), op. 1, d. 166 (Voevoda’s journals for January-June, 1765), ll. 97–98.

<sup>410</sup> *GAKO*, f. 237, op. 2, d. 21, ll. 33ob–34.

Archbishop Varfolomei of Viatka (1758-1774) and the consistory under his command in their turn viewed the petition as a clear sign of the “schismatic” conspiracy. Their first step was to uncover the “chief false teachers [who] scatter the superstition of that Schism” and determine what “sect” they belong to. Therefore, Varfolomei ordered that the supposed leaders be brought to his office for a “humble talk and exhortation.”<sup>411</sup> At the same time, priests of the corresponding parishes led by Father Andrei from the village of Kurchum were to launch active missionary work among the rest of the newly appeared “schismatics.” The task of the mission was to exhort the dissident peasants about their “delusion” “in a humble and mild manner with sufficient explanation from Scripture,” as well as to “catechize them zealously in the faith of Christian piety.”<sup>412</sup> The archbishop’s order specified that whoever among the exhorted remained in the “schismatic superstition” should be accurately listed and reported to the provincial office for the registration in the “schismatic” rank.<sup>413</sup>

The exhortations were not successful, thus the ecclesiastical authorities resorted to severe and more conspicuous measures in order to both facilitate conversion and demarcate “schismatics” from the “faithful Orthodox.” In February, 1765, Archbishop Varfolomei ordered that none of the dissenters be buried in church cemeteries. Instead, if “schismatics” would not repent even on their deathbed, parish priests had to take their corpses “to the woods and bury them there without any service” as they are “torn from the Church and Christian community.”<sup>414</sup> He also commanded the

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<sup>411</sup> *Ibid.*, l. 35ob. The language of local church institutions closely replicated the language of ecclesiastical polemics developed since the beginning of the eighteenth century. See numerous exhortations composed by Feofan Prokopovich, Feofilakt Lopatinskii, and other church hierarchs in, for example: *PSPR*, t. 2 (1722), no. 385 (January 27, 1722), 40–42; *Ibid.*, t. 4 (1724–1725), no. 1436 (December 14, 1724), 296–97, and others; and especially the “Exhortation” of hieromonk Platon (Levshin), future Metropolitan of Moscow: Platon (Levshin), mitr., “Uveshchanie k raskol’nikam” (1765), in *Idem.*, *Pouchitel’nyia slova i drugiia sochineniia*, t. 6 (Moscow: u soderzhatelia Senatskoi tipografii F.Gippiusa, 1780), 3–118).

<sup>412</sup> *GAKO*, f. 237, op. 2, d. 21, l. 36.

<sup>413</sup> *Ibid.*, ll. 36-36 ob.

<sup>414</sup> *Ibid.*, l. 49.

priests to persevere with the exhortations “in a humble and mild manner” and carry out the instructions laid down in the imperial legislation: parish priests were to perform the sacraments of baptism and marriage over “schismatics” children with their parents’ consent, but only on the condition of the children’s complete and irreversible conversion to official Orthodoxy. It particularly meant regular church attendance and partaking of sacraments, as well as cutting ties to any dissidents, including relatives, under pain of severe penalty.<sup>415</sup>

The archbishop’s strategy had little success. Two months after Varfolomei’s order, priest Andrei Iosifov reported to the consistory that only two families, 8 people overall, renounced their intention to register as “schismatics.” At the same time, additional 46 families (273 peasant “souls” of both genders) decided to join their fellows and register as “schismatics,” probably reassured by the fact that the authorities did not persecute the petitioners led by Fefilatov.<sup>416</sup> Thus, to the irritation of the clerics, the total number of dissenters climbed to 955 and kept rising.

In April, 1765, after several months waiting to finally be registered in the “schismatic double poll-tax,” the peasant delegate Simon Fefilatov, together with another elected delegate Grigorii Vakhrushev, petitioned the Viatka provincial office again demanding the registration. They promised to pay the “schismatic tax” in a timely manner “without any arrears.”<sup>417</sup> Then, as this measure did not have the desired effect, the peasant delegates complained over the head of the Viatka authorities to their superior, the governor of Kazan province, Andrei Kvashnin-Samarin (1764-1770). The complaint expressed serious concern that the Viatka provincial office had not yet started to collect the double poll tax from them and that they might be omitted from

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<sup>415</sup> *Ibid.*, ll. 49-49 ob.

<sup>416</sup> *RGADA*, f. 425, op. 1, d. 166, ll. 415-415 ob. See also: I.F. Farmakovskii, “O pervonachal’nom poiavlenii raskola,” *VEV*, no. 5 (1868), Otdel neofitsial’nyi, 82.

<sup>417</sup> *RGADA*, f. 425, op. 1, d. 166, l. 241.

“schismatic” status since the deadline for registration had already passed.<sup>418</sup> Finally, after the governor’s order the Viatka provincial office satisfied the petitioners’ demands.<sup>419</sup>

What was the final number of “schismatics” registered in Viatka in 1765? It is difficult to determine with certainty based on the surviving records. First, due to the complicated bureaucratic procedure associated with the registration even the contemporary civic and ecclesiastical authorities themselves did not have consolidated and absolutely reliable information about it.<sup>420</sup> Second, the peasant electors secretly continued to sign up for “schismatic” status those who so desired even after the official period of registration had passed.<sup>421</sup> Nonetheless, based on various records and reports, it is safe to conclude that there were at least 1341 “schismatics” registered in Viatka province during the third census revision of population completed in 1765. Most of the church dissenters were from Oshetskaia (640 male and female “souls”) and in Sunskaia (476 “souls”) estates; three remaining estates, Kumenskaia, Kyrchanskaia, and Kurchumskaia, had 225 reported “schismatics.”<sup>422</sup>

Statistically speaking, the portion of the newly registered “schismatics” in the population of Viatka province in general and of the specific estates in particular was not substantial. There were almost twenty thousand male souls registered in Sunskaia, Oshetskaia, Kumenskaia, Kyrchanskaia, and Kurchumskaia estates taken together; thus, considering that both genders were represented in the “schismatic” lists, dissenters constituted just over 3% of all estates’

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<sup>418</sup> *Ibid.*, ll. 364-364 ob.

<sup>419</sup> *Ibid.*, ll. 364-365, 415-416.

<sup>420</sup> See, for example, the complaints of the economic treasurer to the ecclesiastical consistory on the differences in his and their statistical data: *Ibid.*, f. 237, op. 74, d. 715, l. 2 ob.

<sup>421</sup> *RGADA*, f. 425, op. 1, d. 167, ll. 322 ob.-323 ob.

<sup>422</sup> In one of the petitions from May 1765 peasant delegates noted that they represented 1215 peasants from Sunskaia, Oshetskaia and Kumenskaia estates. *RGADA*, f. 425, op. 1, d. 166, l. 364. Oshetskaia estate indicates 640 “schismatic” “souls” registered during the third revision (*GAKO*, f. 237, op. 74, d. 715, l. 1). See Farmakovskii’s estimations based on some unknown (or unpreserved) archival documents: I.F. Farmakovskii, “O pervonachal’nom poiavlenii raskola v Viatskoi eparkhii,” 84.



inhabitants.<sup>423</sup> In the entire peasant population of Viatka province at the beginning of 1760's, which numbered almost 400,000 male souls, the number of "schismatics" seems utterly insignificant - no more than 0.17%.<sup>424</sup>

Notwithstanding their relative statistical unimportance, both the church and state authorities regarded the fact of the sudden appearance of more than a thousand religious dissidents in their jurisdictions as a serious challenge. Viatka ecclesiastical authorities were well aware that in the eyes of the church's governing body, the Holy Synod, such a case looked like the result of the local clergy's negligence in their pastoral duties. At the same time, "schismatics" registration burdened the life of local bureaucrats since the appearance in the provincial registries of a new legal category with complicated fiscal responsibilities increased the number of documents they needed to produce and circulate.

### **The Return to the Official Church**

The archival documents give puzzling details about the nature of the "schismatic" registration in Viatka. First, already in May, 1765, peasants from Sunskaia estate Stepan Kostitsyn and Osip Shulakov petitioned the authorities stating that Fefilatov entered them and their families into the "secret schismatics" list "for reasons unknown [to them]" (*nevedomo s chego*). In fact, they "have never been in the Schism" and annually partook in the sacraments, as their parish priest's letter attested. It appeared that Fefilatov enlisted entire families only because Kostitsyn's son and Shulakov's brother-in-law, now living in separate households, declared themselves "secret

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<sup>423</sup> According the second population census (1745) Oshetskaia estate had 3940 male souls, Sunskaia - 3754, Kurchumskaia - 3736, Kyrchanskaia - 5022, Kumenskaia - 3001. In total 19.453 males (plus roughly as many women). *Viatka. Materialy dlia istorii goroda XVII i XVIII stoletii* (Moscow: Tipografiia M.G. Volchaninova, 1887), 261-263.

<sup>424</sup> For the statistics of population in Viatka province according to the 4th, 5th and 6th censuses, see in: K.F. German, *Statisticheskiiia izsledovaniia otnositel'no Rossiiskoi imperii. Ch. 1: O narodonaselenii* (St. Petersburg: Imperatorskaia Akademiia nauk, 1819), 110. See also: V.E. Den *Naselenie Rossii po piatoi revizii. Podushnaia podat' v XVIII veke i statistika naseleniia v kontse XVIII veka*, t. 1 (Moscow: Universitetskaia tipografiia, 1902), 3-6.

schismatics.”<sup>425</sup> Apparently, the registration was a communal affair, not a manifestation of personal religious choice.

Second, only a year after the registration the reverse process started: many of the proclaimed dissenters refused to pay the double poll-tax “for the Schism” they so enthusiastically signed up for and gradually started to return to official Orthodoxy. According to partially preserved archival records, at least 40% of the registered “schismatics” renounced their dissent in the first six years (Table 1). The largest number of petitions unsurprisingly came from Oshetskaia estate where almost half of all of Viatka’s registered “schismatics” lived.<sup>426</sup> The records of the Viatka ecclesiastical consistory show that by 1772, 317 peasants returned to official Orthodoxy, which constituted almost 50% of “schismatics” on the estate.<sup>427</sup> Even Simon Fefilatov and Grigorii Vakhrushev, the peasant leaders who initiated the petition, decided to leave “the Schism” in 1769, just several years after they registered in the new status.<sup>428</sup>

**Table 1. Preliminary number of Viatka "schismatics" who returned to the official Church in 1765-1779<sup>429</sup>**

<b>Estate</b>	<b>1766-1772</b>	<b>1773-1779</b>	<b>For all the years combined</b>
Kyrchanskaia	5	-	5
Kurchumskaia	8	-	8
Kumenskaia	5	-	5
Sunskaia	191	40	231
Oshetskaia	317	28	345
<b>Total</b>	<b>526</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>594</b>

<sup>425</sup> *RGADA*, f. 425, op. 1, d. 166, 383-383 ob.

<sup>426</sup> *Ibid.*, f. 237, op. 74, d. 715, l. 1.

<sup>427</sup> *Ibid.*, f. 237, op. 74, d. 589, ll. 4-9.

<sup>428</sup> *GAKO*, f. 237, op. 74, d. 387, ll. 51-51 ob., 56-56 ob.

<sup>429</sup> Table based on the following documents: *GAKO*, f. 237, op. 82, d. 10, ll. 1-1 ob., 4-4 ob., 5-5 ob.; *RGADA*, f. 1090, op. 1, d. 1373, ll. 197-198 ob., 205; *GAKO*, f. 237, op. 74., d. 319, l. 5; d. 387, ll. 20-23 ob., 44-46 ob., 53-53 ob., 55-55 ob.; d. 460, ll. 67-67 ob.; d. 470, ll. 16-16 ob., 21, 29, 38, 40, 45, 59, 79, 96-99 ob., 122, 127; d. 514, ll. 4 ob.-5, 17-23; d. 589, ll. 4-9; d. 621, ll. 1-1 ob.; d. 623, ll. 431-431 ob., 439-439 ob.; d. 716, ll. 1-1 ob.; d. 717, ll. 469-469 ob.; d. 727, ll. 1-2, 12-12 ob., 22-22 ob., 35-35 ob., 47-47 ob., 56, 67-67 ob., 80-80 ob..

What were the reasons for these peasants to return to the official church so soon after obtaining the desired status?

Archpriest Ignatii Farmakovskii, a nineteenth-century clerical historian who was the first to review the archival records about the earliest occurrence of the “Schism” in Viatka, argued that there were three main causes for this phenomenon. First, he noted the absence of “schismatic” teachers, i.e. spiritual leaders, as well as dedicated places for worship at that time. Second, Farmakovskii credited the exhortations of parish priests. However, a third cause was the most significant for him: the burden of the double poll-tax. Farmakovskii concluded with great satisfaction: “three years after the appearance of the Schism, from among the schismatics emerged the ones who repented of their apostasy from the Church; and there were a lot of such people.”<sup>430</sup>

Even if we accept Farmakovskii’s argument, that pastoral exhortations and burden of severe taxation, coupled with the absence of spiritual leadership among Viatka’s first official “schismatics,” resulted in their return to Orthodoxy, the question remains: why would they register as “schismatics” in the first place knowing that a serious financial burden awaited them and even repeatedly expressed a firm desire to pay the double tax?

One of the most prolific modern experts on religion in Early Modern Russia, Aleksandr Lavrov, has pointed out that many Russians misunderstood the meaning of the double tax for “schismatics.” He argued that when Peter I introduced the tax in 1716, peasants thought that enrollment in the “schismatic” category would enhance their social standing. In other words, they perceived “schismatic” status not as a burden but as an asset and gravitated toward it instead of

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<sup>430</sup> I.F. Farmakovskii, “O pervonachal’nom poiavlenii raskola v Viatskoi eparkhii,” *VEV*, no. 6 (1868), otdel neofitsial’nyi, 94.

away from it, as Peter had actually intended.<sup>431</sup>

It is certain that Viatka peasants were willing to pay a very high price for “schismatic” status. Not only did they express the desire to pay the “schismatic” tax that amounted to 1 ruble 40 kopecks per every male and 70 kopecks per every female in the household. They also were willing to finance the registration itself quite generously. In January, 1766, the peasant Petr Shutov from Sunskaia estate complained to local authorities that another peasant, Grigorii Vakhrushev, owed him 60 kopecks. According to Shutov, back in the summer of 1765 Vakhrushev convinced him to register as a “schismatic” since his relatives had done so already. Shutov agreed and paid 60 kopecks so that Vakhrushev could arrange it. Later on Shutov changed his mind but was not able to get the money back.<sup>432</sup> It is important to point out that the amount Shutov have paid was nearly equal to the poll tax (70 kopecks) he paid annually to the state as a member of Russian peasantry. In sum, what he and his fellow peasants expected to gain from the registration was very valuable to them.

However, the “schismatics” return to the official church coincided with the accumulation of substantial arrears for the “schismatic” tax. In Oshetskaia estate, for example, the arrears amounted to 555 rubles 30 kopecks by 1769; that indicated that hundreds of newly registered “schismatics” had not paid their dues at all.<sup>433</sup> An even worse situation prevailed in Sunskaia estate where the peasant delegates Fefilatov and Vakhrushev were from. After being registered in the desired status, for several fiscal years two thirds of all of the newly announced “schismatics” did not pay a kopeck of the tax they so willingly signed up for. The treasurer in charge of the tax collection in the Sunskaia estate reported the following arrears: 193 rubles 20 kopecks from 138

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<sup>431</sup> Lavrov, *Koldovstvo i religiia v Rossii*, 62.

<sup>432</sup> *RGADA*, f. 1090 (Provincial economic boards and treasuries), op. 1, d. 1373, l. 3.

<sup>433</sup> *GAKO*, f. 237, op. 74, d. 589, l. 1.

male “schismatics” and 113 rubles 40 kopecks – from 162 females. In total it was 306 rubles 50 kopecks from 300 tax “souls.”<sup>434</sup> Kurchumskaia estate “schismatics” had accumulated tax arrears, too.<sup>435</sup>

Sunskaiia estate “schismatics” finally did pay their debt in full in October 1766.<sup>436</sup> However, the documents suggest that there was a debate going on among them whether it worthwhile to pay it or not: two of the family heads refused to pay the tax even under communal pressure and soon filed petitions to be excluded from the lists of “schismatics” together their family members. They also requested the debt for the “Schism tax” to be written off completely, as the state law promised.<sup>437</sup>

Maybe Ignatii Farmakovskii was right: Viatka’s newly appeared “schismatics” simply could not endure heavy fiscal pressure and withdrew from the “Schism?” One important question still remains: what, exactly, did the ones who decided to register expect to gain from the new status? In order to answer this question, it is important to read the petitions through a larger historical context of the registration.

## Petitions

The archival collections of the local administrative institutions such as the Viatka provincial office and the Viatka economic treasurer, alongside the Viatka ecclesiastical consistory preserve a large number of peasant petitions about returning to the official Church. These sources allow us to flesh out the details of the process through which Viatka “schismatics” returned to the status of official Orthodox. The specificity of this sort of archival sources should be necessarily

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<sup>434</sup> *RGADA*, f. 1090, op. 1, d. 1373, ll. 205 ob.-206.

<sup>435</sup> There was a debt of 35 rubles 72 and a half kopecks reported just for the first half of the 1767. *Ibid.*, d. 1369, l. 70.

<sup>436</sup> *Ibid.*, d. 1373, l. 212.

<sup>437</sup> *Ibid.*, ll. 215 ob.-216, 241 ob.-242.

considered, though. For instance, the petitioners' primary goal was to impel the state to fulfill their request, while the bureaucrats' main concern was to assess the validity of such requests in relation to imperial legislation and the practice of its implementation. Only through some narrative passages, the discursive irregularities and the bureaucratic practices recounted in them, are we able to decipher some glimpses of ordinary life from otherwise dry and repetitive petitions, reports, and commands. One major limitation is that these documents tell us nothing about people's religious beliefs. Therefore, this chapter does not try to determine whether Viatka peasants were "real" "schismatics" or not, but attempts to understand the wider social context of the category of "schismatic," as well as presumptions and practices associated with it.

The returnees to the official Church flock submitted their petitions to the economic treasurer. The economic treasurer (*ekonomicheskii kaznachei*) of Viatka province headed the local office of the College of the Economy and controlled the lands and the peasants owned by the Russian Orthodox Church before the secularization of its property in 1764. He was also in charge of tax payments from these peasants, including the "schismatic double poll-tax." The first economic treasurer, Prince Petr Barataev, was appointed to Viatka in 1764; several years later Ivan Milkovich replaced him.

The treasurer was required to report to the ecclesiastical consistory and provincial office about the petitions he received. The consistory, in turn, was required to issue an order to the proper parish priest to arrange for the petitioning peasant to take the "oath rejecting the Schism." After this action, the "schismatic" became "Orthodox" and this change in category was reported to the economic treasurer and provincial office so that they could make corrections in the lists of taxpayers. This procedure could take from a month to half a year. In the worst case, the documents could get lost amidst bureaucratic paperwork.

Unfortunately, the quality of the records renders impossible a full and exact compilation of statistics of such petitions and petitioners. Even the authorities did not have exact information because of the complicated bureaucratic procedure.<sup>438</sup> In addition, ecclesiastical and civil institutions had different aims. For the consistory, the main goal was to convert the “schismatics.” In contrast, the economic treasurer’s primary aim was the collection of the appropriate taxes. Consequently, the numbers mentioned above cannot be taken to be definitive, but they do reveal the tendencies unambiguously.

Although the language of the peasants’ petitions mimics what is usually found in such documents, we can still discern their underlying intentions, which seem more financial than religious. Dozens of petitions take two main rhetorical paths. Peasant delegate Simon Fefilatov’s petition dated January 28, 1769, represents the first approach. He explained that he “dared to be assigned to the Schism because of his thoughtlessness and foolishness.”<sup>439</sup> The second variety of petition instead presents an external reason. For example, in his petition, the peasant Timofei Rudometov from Oshetskaia estate not only invoked his “thoughtlessness and foolishness, looking at others,” but he also stated his desire to be exempted from payment of the “one and half ruble tax to the state College of the Economy.”<sup>440</sup> Although the first rhetorical approach may simply reflect an attempt on the part of the peasants to avoid responsibility by claiming stupidity - one of the “weapons of the weak” as James C. Scott terms it<sup>441</sup> - the second rhetorical approach certainly

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<sup>438</sup> See, for example, the complaints of the economic treasurer to the ecclesiastical consistory on the differences in his and their statistical data: *GAKO*, f. 237, op. 74, d. 715, l. 2 ob.

<sup>439</sup> *Ibid.*, d. 387, l. 52.

<sup>440</sup> *Ibid.*, ll. 38-38 ob.

<sup>441</sup> By the term “the weapons of the weak” James C. Scott characterized “everyday forms of peasants’ resistance – the prosaic but constant struggle between the peasantry and those to seek to extract labor, food, taxes, rents, and interest from them.” Such weapons include foot dragging, dissimulation, false compliance, pilfering, feigned ignorance, slander, arson, sabotage, and so forth; see Scott, *Weapons of the Weak*, 29. See also the work of Daniel Field on the Bezdna and Chigirin peasant uprisings in 1861, where he argues how the peasants used their belief in the kind tsar (“the myth of the tsar”) as a weapon in their conflict with authorities. “Naive or not,” Field says, “the peasants

hints at the peasants' more probable motives.

In fact, several petitions substantiate this inference by enunciating the financial component of the "Schism" very vividly. In September 1766 a group of "schismatics" from the Oshetskaia estate represented by Nikifor Fefilatov, Khrisanf Simakhin, and others appealed to the economic treasurer claiming that they registered in this status "with no good reason" (*naprasno*). It was the delegate Simon Fefilatov who misled them: he allegedly told these peasants that "if they would be registered in the Schism, they would not be obliged to pay the one and half ruble of quitrent." The petitioners found Simon Fefilatov's arguments convincing and signed up for the "Schism" together with family members, 67 people altogether.<sup>442</sup>

Another petition, from January 1770, adds more details to the story about an attempt to avoid paying quitrent. Afanasii Nokhrin and Pavel Permiakov – peasant delegates also from Oshetskaia estate - petitioned the provincial economic treasurer Ivan Milkovich. They represented 185 male and female peasants from two *volosti* of Oshetskaia estate – Oshetskaia (Nokhrin, 63 persons) and Verkhosunskaia (Permiakov, 122 persons).<sup>443</sup> Both petitions repeated the same reasons mentioned in Simon Fefilatov's and Timofei Rudometov's applications: simplicity and desire to be freed from one of the state's imposts. However, the petitioners added: "Before the submission of the present third census reports, we were together with the Orthodox, but in the period of that submission, we wished to be free from the payment of the quitrent to the treasury of the state College of the Economy, and because of our thoughtlessness and foolishness, looking at others, we signed with our families... onto the schismatic tax, and what the Schism is and in what

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professed their faith in the tsar in forms, and only in those forms, that corresponded to their interests;" see Daniel Field, *Rebels in the Name of the Tsar* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1976), 209.

<sup>442</sup> *RGADA*, f. 1090, op. 1, d. 1373, ll. 197-197 ob.

<sup>443</sup> *GAKO*, f. 237, op. 74, d. 514, ll. 7-9 ob., 15-16.



sense it is against the Church dogmas, we do not know.”<sup>444</sup> Soon, they said, in 1766-1769, they turned “from their [previous] thoughtlessness to the sensible position” (*prishli iz legkomysliia svoego v chuvstvitel’noe obrazovanie*), and so they decided to return to “Orthodoxy” and submitted the petitions to do so.<sup>445</sup> The petitioners also convinced the economic treasurer that they “curse the schismatic delusion non-hypocritically” and wish to be Orthodox “forever.” They proved their statements with their parish priests’ reports about “[their] true conversion from the Schism.”<sup>446</sup>

Furthermore, the petitioners made an additional plea - and one that goes to the heart of the matter. They attempted to obtain a refund of the double “schismatic tax” that they had paid “innocently.” As noted in the petitions, in December 1769, when the peasants thought they had already converted to “Orthodoxy,” they were still forced to pay “schismatic tax arrears” all the way back to 1766. The petitions included the exact amount of money each of the peasants paid. Overall, the petitioners had paid 141 rubles 47 ½ kopecks.<sup>447</sup> Because of this, they claimed, they “got into extreme deprivation;” additionally, they were afraid that such a collection would be repeated. Thus, the primary thrust of the petitions centered upon the request to be excluded from the double poll-tax and to be given back the money previously collected.

The report of economic treasurer Milkovich to the ecclesiastical consistory contains more interesting details about these peasants’ requests. First, by writing to the consistory he tried to relieve himself of responsibility for the peasants’ “extreme deprivation,” blaming instead the Viatka provincial office which had not directed him to remove these people from the taxation lists in a timely manner.<sup>448</sup> Clearly, the peasants’ perception of the situation contradicted the state’s

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<sup>444</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>445</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>446</sup> *Ibid.*, ll. 10, 11, 12-12 ob., 13, 14.

<sup>447</sup> *Ibid.*, ll. 2-4.

<sup>448</sup> *Ibid.*, ll. 4 ob.-5 ob.

bureaucratic logic. The petitioners felt that they were properly relieved of the obligation to pay the double tax as soon as they started to attend their parish churches. But from the perspective of the bureaucratic state, in contrast, the peasants stopped being “schismatics” only at the moment when they were removed from rolls of payers of the double tax.

In addition, Milkovich inserted some details into his reports that were not included in the petitions, revealing that he must have interacted personally with the petitioners. Retelling the content of the petitions, he stressed that Nokhrin, Permiakov and others, along with their families, had been attending church services and confession regularly ever since they had returned to the official Church. He also noted that one of them, the by then deceased peasant Trofim Faleleev, was buried according to the rites of the official Church, next to the parish church building.<sup>449</sup> The treasurer could have obtained this information only from the peasants themselves, because these details were absent from both, the petitions and the parish priests’ reports about “[their] true conversion from the Schism.”

Most interestingly, Milkovich alludes to the peasants’ attempt to blackmail local authorities. He wrote in his report that currently the peasants do not see any genuine “freedom” from the double tax, and without “proper care” and the “complete freedom” from the double tax, they will revert to the “Schism.”<sup>450</sup> The records do not reveal if the peasants succeeded in their efforts to get back the money they paid. But the fact remains - there was obviously a mundane motive in the registration of the Viatka “schismatics” in 1764. The context of the earlier confrontation between local peasants and monastery landholders can shed the light on this case.

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<sup>449</sup> *Ibid.*, l. 3.

<sup>450</sup> *Ibid.*, f. 237, op. 74, d. 514, ll. 3 ob.-4.

## Peasant Protests in Viatka

Similar to any other Russian territory in the eighteenth century, the absolute majority (97,9%) of the population of Viatka province was involved in agricultural production. There were more than 145,000 male peasants registered in the mid-1740s, among whom about 108,000 were in the status of “state peasants” (*gosudarstvennye* or *chernososhnye*).<sup>451</sup> In practice that meant that unlike many other categories of Russian peasantry, they were free from bondage to any landholder and communally paid taxes and services directly to the Russian state.

The largest owner of lands and bonded peasants in Viatka prior to 1764 was the Russian Orthodox Church. The Trifonov monastery alone held more than 24,000 male peasants and laborers alongside vast land holdings: among the land assets of the Trifonov monastery the biggest were the already familiar Oshetskaia, Sunskaia, Kurchumskaia, Kyrchanskaia, and Kumenskaia estates. Around 80% of the monastery’s bonded peasants inhabited these lands.<sup>452</sup> The Viatka episcopal cathedra also had more than 8,000 thousand male peasants in bondage.<sup>453</sup>

Importantly, the Viatka peasantry had a long history of conflict with the ecclesiastical landholders. Back in the mid-seventeenth century, soon after the creation of the episcopal see in Khlynov, the peasants assigned to it revolted against the local bishop’s agents.<sup>454</sup> The struggle

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<sup>451</sup> S.V. Tokarev, *Krest’iane Viatskoi provintsii v XVIII veke (iz istorii ekonomicheskogo byta)* (Viatka: Izdanie Viatskogo pedinstituta im. Lenina, 1928), 8; A.I. Komissarenko, “Zemel’nye otnosheniia i fiskal’nye povinnosti krest’ian Viatki v XVIII veke,” in *Rossii i mir: Panorama istoricheskogo razvitiia: Sbornik nauchnykh statei* (Ekaterinburg: NPMP “Volot,” 2008), 574.

<sup>452</sup> Viatka. *Materialy dlia istorii goroda*, 254, 261-263. See also: A. Spitsyn, *Votchiny Viatskogo Uspenskogo Trifonova monastyria* (Viatka: Gubernskaia tipografiia, 1885). The Trifonov monastery ranked as the third richest serf-owning monastery in the entire country, after the Troitse-Sergieva (about 106,000 peasants) and the Aleksandro-Nevskaia (about 25,000 peasants) lavras. V.I. Semevskii, *Krest’iane v tsarstvovanie imperatritsy Ekateriny II*, t. 2 (St. Petersburg: Tipografiia M.M. Stasiulevicha, 1901), 199.

<sup>453</sup> Tokarev, *Krest’iane Viatskoi provintsii*, 32.

<sup>454</sup> For more on the peasant protests in the seventeenth century, see: G. Nikitnikov, *Ierarkhiia Viatskoi eparkhii* (Viatka: v Tipografii K. Blinova, 1863), 107-126; *Drevnie akty, otnosiashchiesia k istorii Viatskago kraia: prilozhenie ko 2-mu tomu sbornika “Stoletie Viatskoi gubernii”* (Viatka: Tipografiia Gubernskago pravleniia, 1881), 158-179, esp. 161, 179-190, 192-201; “Pervyia poseleniia russkikh mezdu rekami Voeiu i Sunoi,” in *Kalendar’ Viatskoi gubernii na 1885 god* (Viatka: Gubernskaia tipografiia, 1884), 156-166. See also: Michels, “Ruling Without Mercy,” 524-525.

continued throughout the eighteenth century as many episcopal as well as monastery peasants tried to resist their bondage to their landowners. I argue that the key for the understanding of the “schismatic” registration in Viatka lies in the context of this struggle.

The peasant protests in Viatka in the eighteenth century coincided with the population surveys. Since the beginning of the century the Russian authorities started to survey the poll-tax paying subjects on a regular basis. The first census was announced in 1718, 2<sup>nd</sup> – in 1743, 3<sup>rd</sup> – in 1764, 4<sup>th</sup> – in 1782, and, finally, 5<sup>th</sup> census – in 1795.<sup>455</sup> During the census periods local authorities of various sorts were obliged to report to higher officials the current state of the tax-paying population under their jurisdiction, as well as changes in it since the previous census. Based on these reports the state adjusted an existing record of the tax-paying population and therefore ratified the newly formed status quo.

#### *The Protests of 1740s and the Polianskii Commission*

The massive peasant protests broke out in Viatka in 1743-1744 during the second census of the population. The ecclesiastical landowners deliberately registered the peasants that lived on those lands as bound to the clerical estates. As soon as this fact became known to the peasants themselves, many of them strongly disagreed with this new, and as they thought, enserfed status. Out of 20,771 male peasants registered as bound to the Russian Orthodox Church in Viatka province, 25% or 5,227 rejected it. The peasants contended that in fact they were state peasants (*chernososhnye krest'iane*) and not monastery peasants (*monastyrskie krest'iane*). By 1748,

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<sup>455</sup> More on the population surveys in the eighteenth-century Russia see in: V.M. Kabuzan, *Narodonaselenie Rossii v XVIII-pervoi polovine XIX v. (po materialam revizii)* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo AN SSSR, 1963); E.V. Anisimov, *Podatnaia reforma Petra I* (Leningrad: Nauka, 1982).

already more than 67% or 14,000 people rejected their bondage to the Church.<sup>456</sup> During 1740-50s, the protest was especially strong in Oshetskaia, Sunskaia, Kyrchanskaia, Kurchumskaia, and Sit'minskaia estates owned by the Trifonov monastery with a total number of 16,602 male "souls" residing in them.<sup>457</sup> The peasant inhabitants of Kyrmyzhskaia *votchina* owned by the Viatka episcopal cathedra with a registered population of 2,309 male "souls," also joined the protests.<sup>458</sup>

Authorities tried to coerce the mutineers into submission but with little success. For instance, in November 1750, representatives of the provincial office and the ecclesiastical consistory together with the Trifonov monastery cellarer brought a punitive military troop to Kurchumskaia estate. They beat the peasants in order to force them to agree to be in "bondage to the cathedra and monasteries."<sup>459</sup> At the same time, the peasants of the Sunskaia and Kyrchanskaia estates declared to the monastery authorities that they lived on state land and paid the taxes to the Viatka provincial chancellery, and that was why they did not want to obey the monastery. The authorities sent troops to the Kyrchanskaia estate, too, and tried to force the peasants to agree to registration. This coercion did not result in the peasants consenting.<sup>460</sup>

In 1752 the Senate, concerned with the situation in Viatka, sent an investigator I. L. Polianskii to the province. He received more than 500 petitions from peasants asserting that they were state peasants rather than ecclesiastical peasants.<sup>461</sup> The petitions were signed by 6,144 males, of which 3,222 officially belonged to the Trifonov monastery.<sup>462</sup>

These documents contain notable argumentation: the peasants asserted their freedom from

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<sup>456</sup> A. I. Komissarenko, "Volneniia krest'ian viatskikh dukhovnykh votchin v 40-50-kh gg. XVIII v.," in *Ezhegodnik po agrarnoi istorii Vostochnoi Evropy*, 1963 (Vil'nius, 1965), 380-381.

<sup>457</sup> *Viatka. Materialy dlia istorii goroda*, 261-264.

<sup>458</sup> *Ibid.*, 378.

<sup>459</sup> Tokarev, *Krest'iane Viatskoi provintsii*, 42-43.

<sup>460</sup> *Ibid.*, 44.

<sup>461</sup> *Ibid.* See also 127 petitions from the peasants of Sunskaia estate in: *RGADA*, f. 425, op. 2, d. 222.

<sup>462</sup> Komissarenko, "Volneniia krest'ian viatskikh dukhovnykh votchin," 385.

the bondage to the monastery based on heritage, not on their current standing. Particularly, about 40% of the petitioners claimed that due to the land shortage their free forefathers relocated to the ecclesiastical estates back in 1646-1678, while about 54% of the petitioners pointed to the period between 1678 and 1722.<sup>463</sup>

Remarkably, one of the people who filed a petition to Polianskii in 1752 was a 30-year old peasant Simon Lazarev *syn* Fefilatov, the same man who later became one of central figures in the “schismatic” registration. His petition described the gradual process of his family’s fall into bondage to the monastery. “My great grandfather Fedot Dmitriev *syn* and my grandfather Mitrofan Fedotov *syn*,” the petition began, “were state peasants (*gosudarstvennyia chernososhnyia krest’iane*) by origin from the [state owned] Berezovskii district (*stan*) of Viatka province.”<sup>464</sup> However, after his great grandfather’s death sometime prior to 1678 Simon’s grandfather Mitrofan had relocated “for some unknown reason” from the Berezovskii district to the village (*pochinok*) Shtenikovskii of Sunskaia district (*volost*), belonging to the Trifonov monastery. During the census of 1678 Mitrofan and his children were registered in this district as residents. Later, the petition continued, during the census announced in 1718, the monastery estate managers enlisted Simon’s father Lazar’ together with his children “into a sole 70-kopeck poll-tax among other monastery peasants,” which meant that they still maintained the status of state peasants even after the relocation. A crucial change in status came about in the second general census of 1745: according to the petition, local authorities “falsely” (*podlozhno*) registered Simon and his brother as “monastery peasants by birth” (*prirodnye monastyrskie krest’iane*). “Since then we were continuously making various quitrent payments to the monastery, as well as supplying it with

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<sup>463</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>464</sup> *RGADA*, f. 425, op. 2, d. 204a, l. 97.

goods,” the petition concluded.<sup>465</sup> The census records kept at the Viatka provincial office fully supported the information Simon Fefilatov provided in the petition. Therefore, while acknowledging his ties of bondage to the ecclesiastical landowner, Simon, like his fellow peasants, still defined his status by heritage: if the ancestors, even distant ones, held free status, so their descendants could not be enserfed.

Unfortunately for the petitioners, including Simon Fefilatov, the state exercised different logic. Polianskii’s commission concluded in 1758 that 11,582 male peasants were lawfully bound to the cathedra and monasteries. The commission used the records of the first general census of the population of 1720-1722, which listed them as bonded to the Church.<sup>466</sup> Thus, the state took the side of the ecclesiastical landowners, and the peasants’ resistance was futile.

### *The Protests in 1760s*

The peasants who registered as “schismatics” in Viatka in 1765 officially held the status of “economic peasants.” What did it mean and what role could this social status play in their desire to change confessional affiliation? The answer to this question is crucial for the understanding of the appearance of the “Schism” in Viatka in the 1760’s.

The Russian Orthodox Church experienced a serious disruption in 1763-1764, which took the form of the secularization of its landholdings. In this period the government of Empress Catherine II (1762-1796) accomplished a goal planned for decades as it ratified the transfer of the enormous mass of the Russian Church’s real estate property to the jurisdiction of the state. In particular, the control of these lands passed from various ecclesiastical landholders, first of all monasteries and bishoprics, to the governmental College of the Economy. In return the Church

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<sup>465</sup> *Ibid.*, l. 97 ob.

<sup>466</sup> *RGADA*, f. 425, op. 2, d. 222, l. 90. Komissarenko, “Volneniia krest’ian viatskikh dukhovnykh votchinn,” 386.

received an annual monetary compensation calculated by the secular authorities.<sup>467</sup> The secularization ended the period of the Viatka Trifonov monastery's vast landholding.

Importantly, the peasants residing on former church properties also experienced a change in their status as bondsmen, and they became known as "economic" peasants (*ekonomicheskie krest'iane*), that is peasants bonded to the state College of Economy. In addition to the 70-kopeck poll tax levied on all Russian peasants, the "economic" peasants paid a special tax, called quitrent (*obrok*), to the College of Economy for the right to use former church lands. The quitrent amounted to 1 ruble and 50 kopecks per male. In comparison, the "state" peasants (*chernososhnye*) only paid 1 ruble of quitrent directly to the state. Soon, however, the monetary obligations of both of these categories were matched: "economic" as well as "state" peasants had to pay 2 rubles of quitrent starting from 1768.<sup>468</sup> There was a myriad of other monetary and non-monetary obligations that accompanied these major duties, such as army conscription, supply of horses for the military, services in labor, etc.

Many of Viatka's former church peasants refused to be registered in the "economic" status. Once again, similarly to two decades previous, they contended that they were *chernososhnye*, i.e. state peasants.<sup>469</sup> The appearance of the "Schism" on the Viatka lands that were already experiencing social unrest does not seem accidental. The sudden advent of "schismatics" in 1764 in Viatka can be understood as another episode of the peasants' struggle against bondage. The key

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<sup>467</sup> On the Catherine's secularization of church lands see: Isabel de Madariaga, *Russia in the Age of Catherine the Great* (New Heaven and London: Yale University Press, 1981), 117-119.

<sup>468</sup> *PSZ*, t. 16, no. 12060 (February 26, 1764), 549. The decree from November 13, 1768 raised the quitrent from economic peasants. It proclaimed collection of 2 rubles of tax money in addition to the poll tax from economic, crown and "other state peasants." *Ibid.*, t. 18, no. 13194 (November 13, 1768), 767.

<sup>469</sup> A wave of peasant protests on the Church-owned lands throughout the country preceded the secularization of 1764 and gave the state an additional argument in favor of the confiscation of church property (Semevskii, *Krest'iane v tsarstvovanie imperatritsy Ekateriny II*, 244-245). However, in Viatka, unlike in other regions, the secularization itself triggered the disorders. A. I. Komissarenko, "Dvizhenie viatskikh ekonomicheskikh krest'ian v 60-70-kh godakh XVIII v.," in *Agrarnaia istoriia i sotsialisticheskie preobrazovaniia severnoi derevni* (Vologda, 1973), 272-273, 277.



to this interpretation is the “one-and-a-half-ruble tax to the state College of Economy,” the tax some peasants claimed to be the reason for them to become “schismatics.”

*Peasants against Treasurer Barataev*

The records of the provincial treasurer’s office preserved in the archives portray a heated conflict between former monastery peasants and their newly appointed supervisor, the economic treasurer. Throughout 1765 and 1766 the protests erupted throughout the lands now under the jurisdiction of the treasurer. Sunskaia and Oshetskaia estates were among the most disrupted.

In June, 1765 the economic treasurer Prince Barataev reported to the provincial capital that a group of more than 200 peasants in Sunskaia estate led by their electors Trifon Obzherin, Klimont Bortnikov, Ivan Stiashkin and others proclaimed to him “unanimously” that they refused to accept both the orders from the College of Economy and his, the treasurer’s, commands.<sup>470</sup> The peasants delegated to their electors the mission to petition the Viatka provincial office about “not being under the authority of some unknown state office;” instead they wished to be “like all other state peasants” in their district.<sup>471</sup> Unsurprisingly, the “troublemakers” were to be arrested and brought to the office of the treasurer.

Peasants not only used disobedience and petitioning as a means to reach their goal but also attempted to appropriate the element of tangible state power, tax collection. The Sunskaia peasants led by Trifon Obzherin and others declared that they were not planning to entrust to the economic treasurer the one-and-a-half-ruble tax collected on the estate for the College of Economy. Instead, they intended to bring this money, almost 3000 rubles in total, to the Viatka provincial office themselves. As a sign of their determination they expelled the treasurer’s agent, who had been sent

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<sup>470</sup> *RGADA*, f. 425, op. 1, d. 166, ll. 489-489 ob.

<sup>471</sup> *Ibid.*, ll. 496 об.-497.

to the Sunskaia estate to collect the money.<sup>472</sup>

Taking hold of the tax money was not just a symbolic act but an attempt to take part in the practice of state power, in the process of the realization of the social structure. By delivering the one-and-a-half-ruble tax money to the provincial office Sunskaia estate peasants did not just exclude the economic treasurer from the process, stripping him of his state-delegated authority, but they also transformed the money itself from the tax imposed on the “economic peasants” by their landlord, the College of Economy, to the similarly sized quitrent the state collected from the “state peasants.” Therefore, by delivering the tax peasants literally were able to change their status to the one they desired. They did not negotiate with the state but took the invisible strings of state power in their own hands.

The archival evidence strongly suggests that the registration as “schismatics” was for many Viatka peasants just one of the ways to negotiate their social status with the state. More specifically, they strove to escape their bondage to the College of Economy.

On September 21, 1765 a newly registered “schismatic” from Oshetskaia estate, the scribe Samson Shutov, was admitted for an audience in the Viatka provincial office. The record in the institution’s journal notes that he verbally expressed serious concerns about the “quarrels” (*ssory*) that existed between the “schismatics” and treasurer Barataev. In order for this conflict not “to come to blows” Shutov requested something similar to what disobedient peasants from the Sunskaia estate had done a year earlier: he asked the provincial office to collect “the poll-tax and other state duties from the peasants registered in the double schismatic tax directly,” bypassing the economic treasurer and his agents. The office did not grant Samson Shutov’s request; instead, it ordered that he be beaten publicly with lashes for his “insolent words.”<sup>473</sup>

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<sup>472</sup> *Ibid.*, l. 489 ob.

<sup>473</sup> *RGADA*, f. 425, op. 1, d. 167, l. 308.

The conflict between the newly registered “schismatics” only grew stronger over time. The delegates Grigorii Vakhrushev and Kirilo Pantyukhin from Oshetskaia estate petitioned the general-governor of Kazan in the beginning of 1766 about the violent actions of the economic treasurer Barataev. According to them, Barataev “wished to ruin the schismatics” because of the “requests” (*pros’by*) they had made over his head to the governor. Particularly, he put the elector Pantiukhin “in the stocks” for two days, so that he as well as other “schismatics” abandoned the “Schism” and were “under his [Barataev’s] command as before.”<sup>474</sup> Similarly, the treasurer allegedly ordered that Vakhrushev be arrested and held in jail for a week, “issuing threats to bring to a complete ruin everyone who had registered in the double tax.”<sup>475</sup>

Treasurer Barataev had his version of the conflict with the “schismatics.” He explained his hostility towards the peasants and their delegates by their “willfulness” (*svoevol’s tvo*), that is, an illegitimate attempt to thwart of the authority of the College of Economy. Barataev explained in his response to the general-governor that in violation of the law, the “schismatics” “solicit not to be in his, Barataev’s, jurisdiction and, therefore, not in the communal tax apportionment (*mirskaia raskladka*).” In fact, the treasurer continued, their motive is purely financial: “all of those schismatics are prosperous people and possess the best lands,” therefore they simply do not want to cover the duties for their poorer, “Orthodox” neighbors, as is required by the communal tax payment. However, the worst consequence of the “schismatics” “willfulness” was that their example inspired disobedience among more than fourteen thousand peasants from Oshetskaia, Kumenskaia, and Kasinskaia estates that were under the authority of the College of Economy.<sup>476</sup>

Thus, the newly-appeared Viatka “schismatics” were at the center of a conflict over taxes

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<sup>474</sup> *Ibid.*, f. 1090, op. 1, d. 1373, l. 84 ob.

<sup>475</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>476</sup> *RGADA*, f. 425, op. 1, d. 167, ll. 327-327 ob.

and jurisdiction.

### *Peasant Motives*

Were the peasants' motives purely financial? From the "schismatics'" petitions it appears that Simon Fefilatov convinced his fellow peasants that whoever "would be registered in the Schism, would not have to pay the required one and a half ruble of quitrent."<sup>477</sup> Even more, according to one of the petitions, Simon Fefilatov also promised an escape from the army conscription. This last obligation terrified Russian peasants since Peter I introduced it at the beginning of the eighteenth century because it involved military service for life or more likely death in military action or as a result of it.<sup>478</sup>

It is quite difficult to calculate if it was more advantageous financially to be a "schismatic" than an "economic" peasant. Take the case of Simon Fefilatov as an example. He had a wife and two male children.<sup>479</sup> Hence, as any other peasant in Russian Empire he was supposed to pay 70 kopecks of poll tax for each male "soul," that is 2 rubles and 10 kopecks in total from the family. Plus, as an "economic peasant," he was obliged to the payment of 1 ruble 50 kopecks of quitrent from every male "soul," that is 4 rubles and 50 kopecks in total.<sup>480</sup> Overall, the state levied a payment of 6 rubles and 60 kopecks from Fefilatov's family every year.<sup>481</sup> Instead, as a "schismatic," in addition to 2 rubles and 10 kopecks of poll tax, Fefilatov hoped to pay 70 kopecks

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<sup>477</sup> *Ibid.*, f. 1090, op. 1, d. 1370, ll. 44 ob.-45.

<sup>478</sup> The petition of Taras Pereskokov, 1767 (*RGADA*, f. 1090, op. 1, d. 1370, l. 212 ob.) The government announced army conscriptions regularly during the eighteenth century since the Russian Empire was constantly involved in military conflicts. Peasant Pereskokov filed his petition in between two such conscriptions: on Oct. 8<sup>th</sup>, 1766, the government ordered to collect 1 recruit from every 300 males in the empire, two years later, on Sept. 1<sup>st</sup>, 1769 it ordered to collect twice as many recruits (1 from 150).

<sup>479</sup> *GAKO*, f. 237, op. 74, d. 387, l. 52.

<sup>480</sup> *PSZ*, t. 16, no. 12060 (February 26, 1764), 549.

<sup>481</sup> This calculation does not consider numerous additional charges in money and in kind levied occasionally by the state and local authorities, let alone many bribes and gifts peasants needed to give to government officials. See, for example: A.I. Komissarenko, "Zemel'nye otnosheniia i fiskal'nye povinnosti," 571-576, esp. 573-575.

per male family member. However, since the “schismatic tax” was collected from both male and female subjects, Simon Fefilatov would also pay 35 kopecks for his wife, totaling 2 rubles and 45 kopecks for the “schismatic tax.”<sup>482</sup> In total, he would give 4 rubles and 55 kopecks of taxes, which was 2 rubles and 5 kopecks, or around 30%, less than the obligation of an “economic peasant” in his circumstances.

In other words, the peasants might have thought that being “schismatic” meant to belong to one of the social ranks alongside with the “state” or “economic” peasant statuses. Thus, by registering as “schismatics” they would stop being economic peasants and instead of paying 1 ruble and 50 kopecks to the College of Economy and 70 kopecks of the poll tax, they would pay only the double poll tax - that is a total of 1 ruble 40 kopecks – that was required of “schismatics.”

However, the state treated the tax for “the Schism” as an additional fee for the ecclesiastical deviation and not as a substitute for all other dues. In accordance with the state’s logic, Fefilatov, as any other “schismatic” peasant, would have to pay the quitrent either to the Office of Economy (1 ruble 50 kopecks), or directly to the state treasury (1 ruble, or 2 rubles since 1768). For example, in the table of “economic” peasants’ debts for 1757-1767 the Viatka provincial office assembled in August, 1767 all three types of taxes were listed as due for collection: poll tax (*podushnye*), quitrent (*obrochnye*), and tax for the “Schism” (*za raskol*).<sup>483</sup> Therefore, the financial responsibilities of Simon Fefilatov’s family to the state simply increased by 2 rubles and 45 kopecks, that is 70 kopecks of an additional “schismatic” tax from male and 35 kopecks from female “souls,” and reached 9 rubles and 5 kopecks, representing an increase of almost 30%.

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<sup>482</sup> PSZ, t. 5, no. 2991 (February 8, 1716), 179; *Ibid.*, t. 7, no. 4526 (June 4, 1724), 300. These decrees declared the payment of “double tax” from male “schismatics” and “half” of it from females. The decree from 1728 explained that it meant that male “schismatics” should only pay poll tax in the double amount, not any other monetary dues. Hence, a male peasant “schismatic” was levied with 1 ruble 40 kopecks (70 kopecks of poll tax and additional 70 kopecks of “schismatic” tax), while females would pay half of poll tax, that is 35 kopecks. *Ibid.*, t. 8, no. 5308 (July 15, 1728), 66.

<sup>483</sup> RGADA, f. 1090, op. 1, d. 1369, ll. 70-71 ob.

**Table 2. The approximate financial responsibilities of Simon Fefilatov's family**

<b>Tax category</b>	<b>“Economic” peasant major dues</b>	<b>“State” peasant major dues</b>	<b>“Schismatic’s” major dues (excluding quitrent)</b>
<i>Poll tax</i>	70 kopecks per male	70 kopecks per male	70 kopecks per male
<i>Quitrent</i>	1 ruble 50 kopecks per male	1 ruble per male	?
<i>“Schismatic Tax”</i>	n/a	n/a	70 kopecks per male, 35 kopecks per female
<i>Simon Fefilatov's family (wife and 2 sons) dues</i>	6 rubles 60 kopecks	5 rubles 10 kopecks	4 rubles 55 kopecks

It is also important to note that the payment of the double poll tax was supposed to liberate newly proclaimed “schismatics” from the dues towards the tithe to parish clerics and the parish church. Even though the law defined relatively modest payments for each rite and even prohibited any additional fees, in practice the load on the parishioners in money and kind was quite substantial.<sup>484</sup> Unfortunately, there is no comprehensive data for Viatka parishes concerning the amount of money and goods collected annually by parish clergy from their parishioners. However, the meticulous diary of the priest Ioann Matsievich from not very distant Iaroslavl’ province gives us a glimpse into the parish priest’s balance sheet at the time. According to this diary, in the 1770s parishioners as a group paid the priest and two clerics 130 rubles a year. In addition, the peasants contributed 10 kopecks from every soul for the parish church maintenance. On average, it resulted in 45 kopecks of annual dues from each male soul in the priest Ioann’s parish. Yet, it was not all: the community had to provide parish clerics with unspecified amount of both productive land and annual allowance in money and kind (*ruga*).<sup>485</sup>

<sup>484</sup> PSZ, t. 17, no. 12378 (April 18, 1765), 117.

<sup>485</sup> V.I. Semevskii, “Sel’skii sviashchennik vo vtoroi polovine XVIII veka,” in *Russkaia starina*, 8 (1877), 507-520.

In a word, by registering as “schismatics” the Viatka peasants simply might have tried to reduce the burden of monetary and non-monetary obligations using the convoluted Russian system of social statuses and taxes attached to them. Yet, it is important to remember that the taxes one paid directly defined social status and, therefore, obligations connected to it. One of the most important of them was a possibility of losing personal freedom. For instance, peasants Ivan Vedernikov and Sidor Kiselev from the Sunskaia estate frankly declared in 1764 that they did not want to become economic peasants simply because they were afraid of being enserfed, as had happened to their neighbors in Kazanskii district, which had been bestowed upon Count Shuvalov.<sup>486</sup>

The strongest argument in favor of the fiscal version of the Viatka “Schism” is the concurrence of the wave of returns to the official Church with the time of tax collection. As soon as the College of Economy started to collect from the newly appeared “schismatics” both taxes, and the 1.5 rubles for being economic peasants and double poll tax, i.e. 1.4 rubles, for being “schismatics,” plus tax for female family members, the petitions to return to official Orthodoxy sprang up. It explains the fact that arrears for the “schismatic” tax appeared already in 1766, only a year after Fefilatov’s petition requesting registration of the “schismatics.”<sup>487</sup>

Another significant argument as to the social character of the term “schismatic” in many peasants’ understanding is the fact that the main organizer of the registration and “schismatics” elector, Simon Fefilatov, was one of the people who in 1750’s unsuccessfully tried to prove own independence from the Trifonov monastery. In 1752 he, among other almost 500 peasants,

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<sup>486</sup> Komissarenko, “Dvizhenie viatskikh ekonomicheskikh krest’ian,” 273.

<sup>487</sup> *GAKO*, f. 237, op. 74, d. 514, ll. 2-3.

petitioned the Senate commissioner Polianskii to prove own status as a state peasant.<sup>488</sup> It is difficult to say how many of his fellows registered after a decade as “schismatics” too, since the list of those registered has not been discovered yet; however, it is certain he was not the only one.<sup>489</sup> Most likely, the registration as “schismatics” was another attempt on the part of Viatka peasants to improve own social status.

## Conclusion

This chapter made the case that the sudden appearance of the “schismatics” in eighteenth-century Viatka can be assessed through different perspectives. It demonstrated the intricacy of Russia’s socio-confessional tapestry as well as the ambiguity in the state’s management of it. Several conclusions can be drawn from this case.

First, this chapter does not argue that there were no genuine religious dissidents in Viatka in the 1760’s. While Simon Fefilatov’s case represents a rather pragmatic approach to the “Schism” category, Tit Nokhrin’s example attests to the presence of the proponents of the “Old Belief” (*staraia vera*) in the region. It would be pure speculation to count how many Nokhrins and how many Fefilatovs there were among first Viatka’s “schismatics.” However, the ambiguity of the concept of “schismatic” as it was treated in the state’s discourse opened multiple and often contradictory interpretations of it. Thus, the application of the terms “schismatic” and Old Believer interchangeably can often lead to a misrepresentation of the historical reality. These concepts should be treated in the context of the complex social fabric of Russian imperial society.

Second, apparently social status and dues were strongly connected. Allison Smith explained recently that the social order of Russian Empire, first of all the vaguely defined *soslovie*,

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<sup>488</sup> *RGADA*, f. 425, op. 2, d. 204a, ll. 97-97 ob.

<sup>489</sup> *Ibid.*, d. 222, ll. 18-26 ob.



or estate, categories were so complicated that it often seems impossible to define them with certainty. Still, she continues, “it consistently defined the type of taxes one paid, the kind of duties one owed the state, the kind of legal process one was entitled to, and the economic and educational opportunities available to one.”<sup>490</sup> The “schismatics” demonstrate that in practice the logic of social stratification could be reversed: in people’s expectations it was not the status in the social hierarchy that defined a person’s dues, rights, and responsibilities, but the dues and responsibilities could determine what status that person held.

Lastly, this case does not just prove the obvious fact that taxation and social status were directly connected but more so demonstrates the mechanics of power rooted in taxation. In other words, the practice of collection and administration of taxes played an equally important role in the functioning of social order as the taxes themselves. The conflict over the “schismatic tax” in Viatka revealed the tangible strings of state power and demonstrated the taxpayers’ attempt to pull them in order to negotiate social status. Unfortunately for the peasants, their effort to appropriate the institutional power of tax collection was hardly effective.

Were the imperial subjects able to bargain their status with the state successfully at all? The case of Viatka “schismatics” perfectly illustrates Elise Wirtschafter’s assessment about the negotiable character of the social categories in Russian empire. She rightly observes that “Russian subjects appropriated the categories for their own purposes, forcing policymakers and administrators to react to the unforeseen consequences of societal interpretations.” She continues that “individuals and groups in society invoked the official categories, claiming legal identities and their attendant rights, in order to survive, prosper, resist authority, and negotiate positions

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<sup>490</sup> Allison K. Smith, *For the Common Good and Their Own Well-Being. Social Estates in Imperial Russia* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 1.

within the framework of the social order.”<sup>491</sup> Yet, the case of the “schismatics” is more complicated because it demonstrates not just manipulation of the existing categories but navigating the situation when there was nothing but interpretation on both the societal and state sides. In other words, the social status of “schismatic” was an unforeseen product of the constructive force of legal language. Strictly speaking, it never ceased to be merely a set of contested interpretations.

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<sup>491</sup> Elise Wirtschafter proposes to look at the complex system of Russian imperial social categories as “a form of social process” rather than a set of established estates or ranks. To be more precise, “a person’s position in the social order constituted a bundle of ascribed definitions and self-definitions, and the ways in which individuals and collectivities identified themselves depended on context and contiguity.” (Wirtschafter, “Social Categories in Russian Imperial History,” 242-243). See also: Idem., *Social Identity in Imperial Russia*.

### **PART III. Enlightened Toleration and “Old Ritualists”**

#### **CHAPTER I. Catherine II and the Contradictions of the Enlightened Tolerance**

The reign of Catherine II (1762-1796) is traditionally treated as a period of Russian history during which the Enlightenment ideals flourished at court and in society, directly affecting the state's policies in all spheres. The attitude towards the “Schism” and “schismatics” was no exception.<sup>492</sup> However, the development of the concept of “schismatic” and the new term “Old Ritualism” (*staroobriadchestvo*) demonstrate, first, how contradictory the Enlightenment thought was in its nature; and second, that the process of policy making was far from straightforward and its consequences were not necessarily intentional. Documents concerning Viatka “schismatics”/“old ritualists” reveal the anatomy of state functioning through different layers of power and authority. Rather than focusing on state policy and its implementation, this chapter will investigate language and the power it bears. It treats state policy as an intertwined discourse with many contributors. Rather than attempting to reconstruct what the historical actors might have thought or felt, this chapter will examine the patterns that emerge from the flow of discourse and the goals the actors were attempting to accomplish through their choices of words.

Each chapter is divided into two parts. The first part presents the general direction of the state policies inspired by the discussions at the imperial center, while the second part demonstrates the consequences of the large scale policies on a micro-level. The numerous archival sources about “schismatics”/“old ritualists” from Viatka region shed light on otherwise obscure and even mundane issues that are not reflected in the documents of high bureaucratic origin.

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<sup>492</sup> Pokrovskii, *Antifeodal'nyi protest uralo-sibirskikh krest'ian-staroobriadtsev*, 288-296; Madariaga, *Russia in the Age of Catherine the Great*, 503-518; A.S. Riazhev, “*Prosveshchennyi absoliutizm*” i staroobriadtsy: vtoraiia polovina XVIII-nachalo XIX v., 2 vols. (Tol'iatti: TGU, 2006).

The inception and limits of religious tolerance in Russia is a question open for debate. It is a problem of essence as well as the definition of the phenomenon of toleration. Certainly, Muscovy and the later Russian empire directly experienced the coexistence of different religious beliefs: Muslims as well as pagans were in fact acknowledged subjects of the tsar since at least the sixteenth century, while numerous foreigners in the service of Russian monarchs were allowed to keep their so-called “foreign” faiths freely, too.<sup>493</sup> Whether we should consider this practice of coexistence to be an exercise in religious toleration is an open question. As Alexandra Walsham demonstrated, “charitable hatred,” or forbearing in regard to otherwise despised groups, was in fact the dominant mode of toleration of religious minorities in medieval and early modern Europe, which were profoundly intolerant.<sup>494</sup> The main questions of this chapter, however, are: Did the tolerance for “foreign faiths” work for the Russian “schismatics?” And what does it mean for the understanding of Russian enlightened toleration?

Soon after taking over the throne from her husband Peter III (January-July 1762), Catherine II (1762-1796) openly announced her commitment to the Enlightenment principles, and seemingly extended them to all imperial subjects. The articles 494, 495 and 496 of her *Instruction to the Legislative Commission (Nakaz Ulozhennoi komissii)* (1767), which was inspired by the ideas of such thinkers as Montesquieu, Cesare Beccaria, Jacob Bielefeld, and others, enunciated Catherine's ideal state of religious affairs in Russian empire. Article 494 explained the practical

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<sup>493</sup> See the discussion of the practice and idea of toleration in the context of Russian history: Robert Crews, *For Prophet and Tsar: Islam and Empire in Russia and Central Asia* (Cambridge, London: Harvard University Press: 2006), 31-60; Matthew P. Romaniello, *The Elusive Empire: Kazan and the Creation of Russia, 1552-1671* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2012), 117-145; G.M. Hamburg, “Religious Toleration in Russian Thought, 1520-1825,” in *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, vol. 13, no. 3 (Summer 2012), 515-559; Paul Werth, *The Tsar's Foreign Faiths: Toleration and the Fate of Religious Freedom in Imperial Russia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014); and others.

<sup>494</sup> Walsham, *Charitable Hatred*.

inadequacy of the restraints on different faiths:

In so vast an Empire which extends its Dominion over such a Variety of People, The prohibiting, or not tolerating their respective Religions would be an Evil very detrimental to the Peace and Security of its Subjects.<sup>495</sup>

Article 496 explained the advantages of liberty in religious questions:

Persecution incenses the human Mind; but permitting each to believe the Tenets of his own Doctrine, softens even the most obdurate Hearts, and keeps them from implacable Obstinacy, quenching those Contentions which are contrary to the Peace of Government and to the Unity of the Citizens.<sup>496</sup>

One of Catherine's decrees from 1773, concerning the construction of a mosque in Kazan, echoed these sentiments, affirming that confessional diversity actually promoted unity among Russia's citizens:

As Almighty God tolerates all faiths, tongues, and creeds on earth, Her Majesty, starting from the same principles, and in accordance with His Holy Will, proposed to follow in the same path, desiring only that Her subjects always are in love and peace with each other.<sup>497</sup>

Yet, Article 495 of *The Instruction to the Legislative Commission* revealed the limitations: not all the faiths are included; and the ultimate purpose of religious freedom was to foster conversion to the only "true" faith, that is Russian Orthodoxy:

And truly, there is no other Method than a wise Toleration of such other Religions as are not repugnant to our own Orthodox Faith and Policy, by which all these wandering Sheep may be reconducted to true Flock of the Faithful.<sup>498</sup>

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<sup>495</sup> *Nakaz eia imperatorskogo velichestva imperatritsy Ekateriny II samoderzhitsy vserossiiskoi dannyi kommissii o sochinenii proekta novago ulozheniia* (St. Petersburg: pri Imperatorskoi Akademii Nauk, 1770), 320. The translation is cited by: *Russia Under Catherine the Great, vol. II: Catherine the Great's Instruction (Nakaz) to the Legislative Commission, 1767*, ed. and trans. by Paul Dukes (Newtonville: Oriental Research Partners, 1977), 104.

<sup>496</sup> *Nakaz eia imperatorskogo velichestva imperatritsy Ekateriny II*, 322 (*Russia Under Catherine the Great*, 104).

<sup>497</sup> *PSZ*, t. 19, no. 13996 (The decree on the toleration of all faiths, June 17, 1773), 775-776.

<sup>498</sup> *Nakaz eia imperatorskogo velichestva imperatritsy Ekateriny II*, 320-322.

This article clearly demonstrates the limitations of enlightened tolerance. It is obvious that our modern idea of religious tolerance as signifying pluralism and freedom of conscious should not be confused with the one of the past. Tolerance in latter sense meant lenience towards various religious groups as long as they did not pose a hazard to the well-being and peace in the society. In addition, what “faiths” and “laws” were to be tolerated was an open question, since it concerned only the ones “not repugnant to our own Orthodox Faith and Policy.” The confessional uniformity was in fact an ultimate, even if long-term goal. It especially concerned the so-called “schismatics.”

### **“Schismatic” Runaways, the Official Church, and the Limits of Tolerance**

At the very beginning of Catherine II’s reign the question of the “Schism” arose in the context of concern over population decline. Russia had a traditional problem with runaway subjects, many of whom were so-called “schismatics” who escaped religious persecution to settle in the territory of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and Ottoman Empire. Russian state authorities expressed concerns about this issue already at the beginning of the eighteenth century, issuing numerous manifestos promising pardon to subjects who would return and severe punishment to the ones remaining outside of their motherland. Such decrees yielded no results.<sup>499</sup> In 1735 Anna Ioannovna’s government even executed a full-scale military operation, during which Russian forces destroyed most of the settlement of runaways in Poland close to Russian border and forcibly repatriated more than 13,000 runaways. Notwithstanding the

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<sup>499</sup> See, for example, the letter to Peter I from his close associate and future archbishop of Nizhnii Novgorod Pitirim in regard of Vetka region “schismatics”: P.V. Verkhovskoi, *Uchrezhdenie Dukhovnoi Kollegii i Dukhovnyi Reglament*, t. 2 (Rostov-na-Donu, 1916), 118 (First suggestion of Pitirim on how to eradicate the “Schism,” 1718). More on the Vetka as a problematic border region see in: E.V. Akel'ev, “Politika rossiiskogo pravitel'stva v otnoshenii zarubezhnykh staroobriadcheskikh obshchin v 20-60-kh gg. XVIII v.,” in *Staroobrzędowcy za granica II. Historia. Religia. Język. Kultura*, ed. by Doroty Paśko-Koneczniak, et al. (Toruń: EIKON, 2014), 183-184.

seeming success of the operation, runaways soon filled those same territories again.<sup>500</sup> In 1755 the government of Empress Elizabeth issued a manifesto inviting “people of different ranks” and “schismatics especially” to return to their motherland. The manifesto promised them a pardon for their flight provided they returned by the end of the coming year.<sup>501</sup> The call was not really successful, so the government postponed deadline several times up until 1761.<sup>502</sup> This legislation concerning runaway “schismatics,” like previous manifestos, did not promise them any sort of religious freedom or an end to persecution. Instead it claimed that they had no reasons to be concerned about reprisals upon return to Russia.<sup>503</sup>

During the short reign of Peter III (January-July 1762) Russian authorities also paid close attention for this problem. The chief prosecutor of the Ruling Senate, Aleksandr Glebov, in January 1762 commanded the Senate in the name of the emperor to compose a manifesto that would address “Russian runaway schismatics who live in Poland and other foreign places.”<sup>504</sup> This planned manifesto contained a major change compared to previous ones. It was supposed to promise returnees “no prohibition in keeping the law according to their tradition and the old printed books,” as well as a specially designated territory in Siberia for their settlement.<sup>505</sup> The draft manifesto justified the change from the traditionally hostile view of “schismatics” on the part of the Russian church and state with a revealing statement: “even followers of foreign faiths, such as Mohammedans and idolaters, reside in Russian empire,

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<sup>500</sup> M.I. Lileev, *Iz istorii raskola na Vetke i v Starodub'e XVII-XVIII vv.*, vyp. 1 (Kiev: Tipografiia G.T. Korchak-Novitskogo, 1895), 289-302.

<sup>501</sup> *PSZ*, t. 14, no. 10454 (September 4, 1755), 414.

<sup>502</sup> *Ibid.*, t. 15, no. 11179 (January 2, 1761), 595.

<sup>503</sup> *Ibid.* See also: Lileev, *Iz istorii raskola na Vetke*, 506. Evgenii Akel'ev stresses the fact that the discussion of the possibility of giving returnees freedom of religious practice took place on the highest level already in the 1750's and was based on the persistent requests from so-called “schismatics” living beyond the Russian border. (Akel'ev, “Politika rossiiskogo pravitel'stva,” 193). There was no legal outcome to these discussions until the beginning of the 1760's.

<sup>504</sup> *PSZ*, t. 16, no. 11420 (January 29, 1762), 894.

<sup>505</sup> *Ibid.*

while those schismatics are in fact Christians, who only adhere to ossified superstition (*zastareloe sueverie*) and stubbornness.” In line with the pragmatic enlightened attitude, the document concluded: they should not “alienate them with force and distress,” because “they run away to foreign countries and live there in big numbers and with no benefit” to the Russian empire.<sup>506</sup> However, only during the reign of Catherine II, who removed her spouse Peter III from power in June 1762, did such a manifesto see the light of the day.

In October 1762 the Ruling Senate and Holy Synod gathered for a joint conference that was supposed to decide what parameters of religious tolerance “schismatic” returnees could expect in their motherland. Notwithstanding Senate's proposition to consider “schismatics” request to build their own churches and practice their faith freely, the Synod could not agree to such terms under any conditions.<sup>507</sup> The Synod’s collective opinion submitted to the Senate several days later confirmed its uncompromising position, adding that returning “schismatics” “should be treated in the same way as registered schismatics living in Russia are being treated, [i.e.] without any oppression.”<sup>508</sup> The latter statement is highly questionable since the very reason for “schismatics” leaving Russia lay in what they perceived as the oppression of their religious beliefs and practices.

The conference resulted in two manifestos inviting foreigners as well as Russian runaways, and the “schismatics” specifically, to come and settle in Russia. In accordance with the Synod’s opinion, it did not contain a promise of freedom of religious practice that had been planned in the manifesto of Peter III. Instead the new law repeated the Synod’s assurance of

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<sup>506</sup> *Ibid.*, 894-895.

<sup>507</sup> “The opinion of bishop Afanasii of Tver’,” in E.V. Barsov, ed., *Akty, otnosiashchiesia k istorii raskola v XVIII v.* (Moscow: n.p., 1889), 20.

<sup>508</sup> “Protokoly Pravitel’stvuiushchego Senata 1761, 1762 i 1763 gg.,” *Senatskii arkhiv*, t. 12 (St. Petersburg: Senatskaia tipografiia, 1907), 190.



the absence of “any oppression” for the “schismatics” in Russia. The Senate referred to the main laws regulating the life of this category of imperial subjects including the double poll tax and a ban on any sort of proselytism, and it added that the “schismatics” would not be forced to shave beards or wear specially designated stigmatizing dress. The only similarity to the original intent of Peter III’s manifesto was the promise of free settlement land in Siberia, with the addition to vacant lands in Voronezh, Belgorod and Kazan provinces.<sup>509</sup>

Notwithstanding the Synod’s negative reaction towards any sort of religious freedom for the returning runaway “schismatics,” Empress Catherine II requested the personal opinions of Synod members in regard to the “schismatic” question.<sup>510</sup> The members submitted their responses the following year. They differed significantly one from another, yet there was a unifying motif: no tolerance or freedom of religion could be allowed for “schismatics” as they were.

Bishop of Tver’ Afanasii (Volkhovskii) (d. 1776), one member of the Holy Synod, offered a seemingly absurd statement: permitting the “schismatic” religious practice would lead to a *schism* in Russian Church. Afanasii wrote:

If schismatics returning from abroad would be allowed to erect churches, have their own priests and perform rituals in accordance with their superstition, undoubtedly Russian Church would be severed in two: one will belong to Orthodox [believers], and another to schismatics.<sup>511</sup>

Tolerance towards the “schismatics” would lead to an even worse outcome, Afanasii continued, namely, endangering not only the official Church, but the state itself. Since “schismatics neither hold us [i.e. adherents of the official Church – E.G.] to be true Christians, nor do they consider Russian monarchs to be legitimate (*blagochestivye*),” tolerance towards them would lead to social

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<sup>509</sup> *Ibid.*, 190-191, 201-206, 211-216. See also: *PSZ*, t. 16, no. 11720 (December 4, 1762. On the permission for foreigners as well as Russians to come and settle in Russia), 126-127.

<sup>510</sup> “The opinion of Bishop Afanasii of Tver’,” 20.

<sup>511</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

“upheaval” (*vozmushchenie*) and “rebellion” (*bunt*).<sup>512</sup> These fears were basically a repetition of the “anti-schismatic” sentiment from a half-century earlier, perfectly expressed by Peter the Great’s closest ecclesiastical associates Feofan Prokopovich and Pitirim of Nizhnii Novgorod (see Part II, Chapter I). As a result, Afanasii’s suggested action simply repeated the existing law enunciated in the December 1762 manifestos, which promised “schismatic” returnees that they would not be repressed provided they did not proselytize.<sup>513</sup> According to Afanasii, no other liberty or tolerance should be considered.

Another opinion, submitted jointly by Archbishops Gavriil (Kremenetskii) of St. Petersburg (1711-1783) and Amvrosii (Zertis-Kamenskii) of Krutitsy (1708-1771), agreed with Afanasii that the “schismatics” could be allowed to return to Russia only under the same conditions as current “schismatic” residents faced. However, these hierarchs directly expressed negative views not only towards liberty for the “schismatics” but towards religious tolerance in general:

Syncretism, or allowance of different faiths in an autocratic state, is considered harmful to it by all sensible people, because nothing binds subjects to their monarch as common faith does; on the contrary difference in faith is considered dangerous, therefore, trying to avoid it, many monarchs have been and still do exterminate adherents of different faith as they appear; wherever they are being tolerated discord inevitably arises, if not in political, then in spiritual affairs.<sup>514</sup>

Just like Afanasii, Gavriil and Amvrosii warned the empress of the possibility of *schism* in the official Church should religious liberty be enacted for the “schismatics”: “the Church in Russia may be torn in two with the great decline in piety”.<sup>515</sup> They even intimated that a conspiracy among the Russia’s “domestic schismatics” underlay the requests to gain “conditions and privileges” for

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<sup>512</sup> Ibid.

<sup>513</sup> Ibid., 22.

<sup>514</sup> “The opinion of Archbishops Gavriil and Amvrosii,” in Barsov, *Akty, otnosiashchiesia k istorii raskola*, 24.

<sup>515</sup> Ibid., 25.

“schismatic” returnees. The hierarchs explained this suspicion by citing the existence of religious tolerance (which they deemed inadvisable) in Polish-Lithuanian lands: “there is no strong need for the foreign schismatics to return to Russia since abroad they have all the liberty to believe and live as they wish”.<sup>516</sup>

The hierarchs also replied to the point raised in Peter III’s proposed manifesto that many faiths, including Islam, resided freely in Russian empire. This fact could not excuse the “schismatics” and serve as a basis for tolerating them, they argued. The reason was that the “schismatics” represented “heresy” and “superstition,” deceiving the flock of the official Church, and not a “foreign” faith.<sup>517</sup> The hierarchs proposed what they called a “political” way to return subjects to the authority of Russian monarchs, yet maintain intolerance. Namely, they suggested demanding of the Polish government the extradition of the “schismatics.” Otherwise it would be “rightful and righteous” to annex Polish territories where the runaways resided.<sup>518</sup>

The last Synod members to submit their opinion of the “schismatic” problem were Metropolitan Dimitrii (Sechenov) of Novgorod (1709-1767) and Bishop Gedeon (Krinovskii) of Pskov (c. 1726-1763). They were the least hostile towards the “schismatics.”<sup>519</sup> Gedeon and Dimitrii called upon the empress to invite the runaway “schismatics” from abroad “so that through her mercy not at once but gradually they could be brought into unity with the church they distanced themselves from so long ago, [and] therefore piety as well as the state’s population could be

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<sup>516</sup> Ibid., 25.

<sup>517</sup> Ibid., 25-26.

<sup>518</sup> Ibid., 26-27.

<sup>519</sup> The opinion of these hierarchs was obviously written sometime between February and June 1763. On February 28 Catherine II asked prosecutor-general Aleksandr Glebov to “wake [them] up” to write about “schismatic affair” as they promised (“Catherine II’s note to prosecutor-general Aleksandr Glebov, February 28, 1763,” in *Sbornik Russkogo istoricheskogo obshchestva*, t. 7 (St. Petersburg: Tipografiia Imperatorskoi Akademii nauk, 1871), 234-235). On June 22, 1763, the bishop of Pskov died suddenly.

increased.”<sup>520</sup> Such leniency could be allowed only because of what the hierarchs perceived as ignorance and stubbornness of the “schismatics.”<sup>521</sup> Referring to the example of Jesus Christ himself revealed in the Gospels, Dimitrii and Gedeon stated that it is “better to condone them [the use of old rituals], if there is no other option, and save their souls by including them in the Holy Church, rather than without condoning leave them to perish in error.”<sup>522</sup> Yet, Dimitrii and Gedeon still espoused as the ideal the complete unification of all Orthodox believers in rituals as well as in faith. Otherwise, the “scandal” (*soblazn*) and “discord” were inevitable, causing harm to the state as well as to the church.<sup>523</sup> In this Dimitrii and Gedeon, not surprisingly, shared the same mindset as their fellow Synod members. Under no circumstances could the “schismatics” be accepted as an independent and tolerated form of Christianity, a separate confession. The subsequent governmental decisions showed that Dimitrii’s and Gedeon’s more lenient position towards “schismatics” prevailed over uncompromising antipathy towards the “Schism” on the part of other Synod members.

On March 3, 1764, the Russian government announced a new empire-wide census of “schismatics” and declared new legal limits for them.<sup>524</sup> The process of making the new limits involved both civil as well ecclesiastical bureaucrats and clearly demonstrated that finding a middle ground between the tolerance, centered on the social wellbeing, and the church hierarchs’ traditional abhorrence of what they perceived as the “Schism,” was next to impossible. A joint

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<sup>520</sup> “The opinion of Dimitrii of Novgorod and Gedeon of Pskov,” in Barsov, *Akty, otnosiashchiesia k istorii raskola*, 28, 33.

<sup>521</sup> *Ibid.*, 27-28.

<sup>522</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

<sup>523</sup> *Ibid.*, 27-28.

<sup>524</sup> The census of the “schismatics” accompanied the third census of population since 1721, conducted in 1761-1764. *PSZ*, t. 16, no. 12067 (March 3, 1764), 596-597. In January 1765 the deadline for the registration of the “schismatics” was postponed for three months (*Ibid.*, t. 17, no. 12315 (January 19, 1765), 12). The documents for the third census: *PSZ*, t. 15, no. 11364 (November 28, 1761), 834-837; *Ibid.*, t. 16, no. 11632 (August 5, 1762), 38-39; *Ibid.*, no. 11755 (February 13, 1763), 158-160; *Ibid.*, no. 12141 (April 28, 1764), 724-725.

conference of the Ruling Senate and Holy Synod that took place in 1763 came up with a circular and, therefore, uncertain resolution: the new manifesto was supposed to announce that Russian “schismatics” should live on the same conditions as were promised to “schismatic” runaways returning from abroad in the manifesto from December 14, 1762, yet the government assured the latter that upon return they will be treated in the same way as the “domestic schismatics.”<sup>525</sup> That meant that the “schismatics” were to continue paying the double poll tax and to be administered in accordance with existing highly restrictive legislation.

Yet, the Synod members added one essential remark that fundamentally changed the state policy towards the “Schism.” It stated that those individuals who “due to their own foolishness” (*po svoemu nerazumiiu*) use two fingers in the sign of the cross, yet otherwise comply with the official Church, should not be repudiated, in other words not be considered as “schismatics.” The Synod reasoned: “in hopes that, not being excommunicated from the faithful, they will [eventually] learn our Orthodox faith in full and will concur with the Holy Church completely.”<sup>526</sup> This pronouncement marked a serious change from the previous direct association between the use of two fingers in the sign of the cross and the “Schism.” Now it became a question of the acceptance of the official Church and its sacraments, not of complete obedience to its customs as well as teachings.<sup>527</sup>

So, even though the Russian government took inspiration from Enlightenment reasonableness and tolerance, policy towards runaway “schismatics” was mostly based on compromise with the church hierarchy, which was traditionally extremely hostile towards them.

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<sup>525</sup> *RGADA*, f. 18 (Spiritual affairs), op. 1, d. 199 (On the count of schismatics and levying the double poll tax on them, 1763), l. 2 (Senate’s report to Catherine II, December 22, 1763).

<sup>526</sup> *Ibid.*, l. 1 ob.

<sup>527</sup> *Ukazy vsepresveteishiia derzhavneishiia velikiia gosudaryni imperatrity Ekateriny Alekseevny samoderzhitsy vsereiiskiia, sostoiavshiesia Genvaria s Igo Iiulia po 1e chislo 1764 goda* (St. Petersburg: pri Senate, 1778), 216-218 (*PSZ*, t. 16, no. 12067 (March 3, 1764), 596-597).

“Schismatics” did not fit well into the idea of religious tolerance. The bishop of Tver’ Gavriil (Petrov) (1730-1801), who was one of Catherine II’s closest and most favored hierarchs for his commitment to learning and education, clearly expressed in the end of 1760s why the “schismatics” did not deserve to be tolerated:

Forbearance is preferable to persecution when it comes to the sects because it incenses [the human Mind].<sup>528</sup> Therefore, from all of them, who live peacefully, the Church patiently awaits their conversion, and society is not troubled by them at all. [While] the schismatics are dangerous in regards to both the Church and governance... From all the sects, the Schism is the closest to the Church for it pertains nothing else but the rituals; yet, their sophistries are the most dangerous for [their] aversion to Orthodox believers stretches to the government and even to the sovereign him/herself.<sup>529</sup>

Gavriil concluded that if the authorities could not eradicate the “Schism,” they should at least contain it.

### **Fanaticism, Ignorance, and “Schismatics” Self-Immolation**

The Chief Procurator of the Holy Synod, Ivan Ivanovich Melissino (1718-1785), appointed to this position in June 1763, also took part in the discussion of policies towards “schismatics” and their relationship with the official Church. He submitted his plan concerning the “Roscolniks” (sic!), that is “schismatics,” in French to Catherine II in 1765, soon after the deadline for “schismatic” registration expired.<sup>530</sup> His plan was inspired by several direct interactions with some

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<sup>528</sup> Gavriil obviously references Article 496 of *The Instruction to the Legislative Commission*, which stated: “Persecution incenses the human Mind; but permitting each to believe the Tenets of his own Doctrine, softens even the most obdurate Hearts...” *Nakaz eia imperatorskogo velichestva imperatritsy Ekateriny II*, 322 (*Russia Under Catherine the Great*, 104).

<sup>529</sup> Cited by: B.V. Titlinov, *Gavriil Petrov, mitropolit novgorodskii i sanktpeterburgskii* (Petrograd: Tipografiia M. Merkusheva, 1916), 871-872.

<sup>530</sup> “Propositions touchant les Roscolniks par Jean de Melissino,” in Barsov, *Akty, otnosiashchiesia k istorii raskola*, 17. (See also more recent, yet not better executed, publication of the same document: I.A. Ivanov, “... Ne nazyvat’

“Roscolniks.”<sup>531</sup>

Just like his clerical associates in the Synod, Melissino traced the origin of the “schismatics” to “ignorance” (*l’ignorance*). However, unlike them, the chief procurator attributed this quality not only to common people, whose lack of reason (*raison*) was especially evident in regard to religion, but also to Russian clergy and even more, the church hierarchy (*les personnes graduees*). The clergy, he argued, “instead of preaching to the people, educating them and bringing them to reason, and to the truth (*verite*),” used its own excessive authority to force people to obedience with “threats and tortures” (*des menaces et des tourmens*).<sup>532</sup>

Like the Synod hierarchs, Melissino warned against the “schismatics,” who are marked by their “hatred towards priests;” they posed a particular threat to the state. Unlike the Synod hierarchs, however, the chief procurator did not envision a direct rebellion against the state; instead, he reiterated the major concern of the European *philosophes*, namely “fanaticism” (*fanatisme*), which could arise from the “schismatics” religious “enthusiasm” (*enthousiasme*). Therefore, in contrast with the Synod members, Melissino portrayed the “schismatics” as an exotic example of a more general problem identified in the Enlightenment thought, namely the fusion of religion and reason.<sup>533</sup> Church hierarchs, on their side, held to a long tradition of the portraying of “schismatics” as a major foe to the authority of the Russian Church and sovereign’s power.

Melissino’s practical proposals were very similar to the ones suggested by the Synod and already implemented in the manifesto of March 3, 1764. Specifically, he proposed treating the two groups of the “schismatics,” namely priestly (*popovshchina*) and priestless (*bespopovshchina*),

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ikh bol’she raskol’nikami, a upotrebiat’ drugoe nazvanie...’ Predlozheniia ober-prokurora Sviateishego Sinoda I.I. Melissino Ekaterine II o neobkhodimosti izmeneniia zakonodatel’sтва o raskol’nikakh. 1763 g.,” *Otechestvennye arkhivy*, 4 (2007), 118-127).

<sup>531</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>532</sup> Ibid., 10-11.

<sup>533</sup> See especially on the exoticization and anthropologization of the “Schism” in the discourse of Russian educated society of the eighteenth century: Tsapina, ““Smekha dostoinie pozorishche?”” 207-256.

differently. Melissino favored the former group, especially since, according to his report, he had personal contacts with their representatives. They, he argued, should be allowed to have their own churches and practice rituals in accordance with the old printed books, but under the formal spiritual authority of the official Church. Melissino argued that local hierarchs could take charge of appointing their priests and directly control their communities. Interestingly, he proposed dropping the term “schismatics,” and substituting something neutral, such as “doublepayers” (*dvoedantsy*).<sup>534</sup>

The priestless “schismatics,” on the other hand, Melissino characterized as “truly Roscolniks, that is to say people whose religion is absolutely false and filled with error and vice, in a word Schismatics.”<sup>535</sup> They were especially dangerous because of their “Enthusiasm and even Fanaticism”; therefore they should be watched continuously and their “assemblies” should be restricted. Even so, Melissino argued that the best way to deal with them was not through force but instead “educating” them in the official religion. For this purpose, he proposed to choose talented priests who would earn a reward for every “schismatic” returned to the official Church.<sup>536</sup>

Melissino’s fear of priestless “schismatics” “enthusiasm and even fanaticism” echoed the worry of the addressee of his proposal, Empress Catherine II. As he quoted her (otherwise unknown) letter, she hoped that their “enormity of errors” would not produce “fanaticism.”<sup>537</sup> Melissino added that priestless “schismatics” had fallen into “vices and crimes that are too notorious... to describe.”<sup>538</sup> The “errors” and “crimes” Melissino and Catherine had in mind were most likely the instances of self-immolation or plans to do so, which arose in the wake of the

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<sup>534</sup> “Propositions touchant les Roscolniks,” 16.

<sup>535</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>536</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>537</sup> *Ibid.*, 12-13. Catherine II’s disdain towards “fanaticism” demonstrated the case of the famous political prisoner of her reign, Bishop Arsenii Matseevich, whom the empress famously called a “fanatic.” See about the case: I. Snegirev, *Arsenii Matsievich mitropolit rostovskii i iaroslavskii* (Moscow: v tipogrffii Bakhmeteva, 1862).

<sup>538</sup> “Propositions touchant les Roscolniks,” 12.



census of “schismatics.” For example, in October 1764 the empress received a report from the Senate stating that sixty-one peasants of both genders from Novgorod province had abandoned their households and locked themselves up in a wooden building. These peasants opposed registration as “schismatics” and prepared to commit collective suicide.<sup>539</sup> The Senate suggested seizing them covertly and sending for hard labor to Siberia. Catherine II was much less severe in her reaction and proposed instead to try persuasion first, using other local “schismatics” as intermediaries: “choose from the schismatics living there the ones who wiser and more well-behaved and send them to talk to the others,” she wrote.<sup>540</sup> Catherine’s plan apparently worked: the peasants returned home and agreed to register as double poll tax payers.<sup>541</sup>

News of several other cases of attempted self-immolation reached the government soon after.<sup>542</sup> In one case, “schismatics” captured the Zelenetskii monastery in Novgorod province, causing the deaths of seven laymen. This incident spurred the creation of one of the most important documents of “anti-schismatic” polemic from the second half of the eighteenth century – the court preacher Platon’s (Levshin) exhortation of “schismatics,” first published in 1765. Catherine II herself ordered the composition of this exhortation towards “erring” people (*zabluzhdaiushchiesia*) as an expression of “her righteous wrath” against the “riot” of those “schismatics.”<sup>543</sup>

Like many other “anti-schismatic” works since the beginning of the eighteenth century, the

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<sup>539</sup> *RGADA*, f. 18, op. 1, d. 208 (About “schismatics” gathered for self-immolation in the village Liubachi, Novgorod province. 1764), ll. 2-2 ob. (Senate report to Catherine II, January 12, 1764)

<sup>540</sup> *Ibid.*, l. 2 ob. See also: *PSZ*, t. 16, no. 12272 (October 29, 1764. Senate report about “schismatics” opposing the registration in double poll tax and preparing for self-immolation), 945-947.

<sup>541</sup> *RGADA*, f. 18, op. 1, d. 208, l. 3.

<sup>542</sup> See *PSZ*, t. 17, no. 12326 (February 14, 1765. Senate decree confirming its own October 29, 1764 order), 22-24. See also the list of self-immolation cases during Catherine II’s reign: Romanova, *Massovye samosozhzheniia staroobriadtsev*, 261-262.

<sup>543</sup> Platon (Levshin), “Uveshchanie k raskol’nikam,” 7-8. See also other editions of the same work under the title “Uveshchanie vo utverzhdanie istiny” (1765, 1766, 1773, 1839, 1842, 1882, and others). The genre of Synodal exhortation does not assume individual authorship. Instead, it speaks to the addressees in the name of the Church represented by the Holy Synod.

exhortation focused on common people's "ignorance" and defects of human nature. Yet, in accordance with its author's enlightened outlook, ignorance was not a regrettable failing, but an excusable consequence of the conditions of commoners' existence.<sup>544</sup> The exhortation stated with regret that some "infirm" (*nemoshchnye*) Russians gave into "the common human weakness" and believed that Nikon's corrections were not just in books but in the faith itself. The exhortation explained:

It was easy for them to be deluded. For they were simple people, and in addition many of them were illiterate, and always busy with labor and crafts... This mistake of theirs is pardonable, since all people are subject to weaknesses, yet their stubbornness is not pardonable.<sup>545</sup>

Most significantly, the exhortation emphasized the idea of the "schismatics'" social deviance in addition to the traditional denunciation of their doctrinal faults. The idea of "society" (*obshchestvo*) was central in the exhortation. On the one hand, this term referred to the Church the "schismatics" broke from. "So, why would you withdraw from the Church, that is from the society of all Christians, just for a small number of indecently living priests?" the exhortation inquired, referring to the "schismatics'" criticism of corrupt clergy of the official Orthodox Church.<sup>546</sup> The exhortation explained that the very term "schismatics" (*raskol'niki*) referred to the fact that they were "leaving their own households and relatives and run away into the forest." "You are being called schismatics, that is withdrawing from the society," the exhortation explained.<sup>547</sup> This meaning directly opposed the concepts of "schism" and "schismatics" used a century earlier, at the

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<sup>544</sup> See Platon's sermon on the education/enlightenment (Russian term "prosveshchenie" bears both of these meanings) both secular and spiritual performed on September 20, 1765 and entitled "The Word on the good of education: Platon (Levshin), "Slovo o pol'ze uchenii," in Idem., *Pouchitel'nyia slova i drugia sochineniia*, t. 1 (1779), 351-363. More on Platon as one of the key figures of Russian religious Enlightenment see in: Wirschafter, *Religion and Enlightenment in Catherinian Russia*.

<sup>545</sup> Platon (Levshin), "Uveshchanie k raskol'nikam," 29.

<sup>546</sup> Ibid., 73.

<sup>547</sup> Ibid.

Moscow Church Council of 1666. At that time, when Avvakum Petrov and his colleagues were accused of “schism,” it meant that they violated the Church’s unity, rather than withdrawing from it. The words remained the same, but the meanings shifted dramatically.

The exhortation ascribed an additional meaning to the concept of society, already expanded from the flock of the official Orthodox Church to Russian society at large. It proposed a mercantilist logic to explain the appropriateness of using military force against runaway “schismatics”:

We do not pursue you for your faith, but we send soldiers after you because when you are running away into the woods, you do not perform services for your Sovereign, do not pay taxes, do not till the land, and you leave your households, relatives and landlords. Therefore, our Sovereigns send parties in pursuit out of care for your and the whole state’s well-being. This is not to torture you for [your] faith, but so that you can be returned to your prior dwellings, so that you may live on your lands granted to you by God and Sovereign, as other subjects faithful to the Sovereign Majesty live.<sup>548</sup>

Similarly, the exhortation explained the double poll tax for “schismatics” as the ruler’s mercy rather than persecution. It stated that the double poll tax was a “light penalty” for social deviance, not for religious dissent:

our Sovereigns always being merciful, and correcting [subjects] more with gentleness than cruelty, levied on you only the double poll tax not because of [your] faith, but rather by means of this light penalty to restrain you from running away and revolts and keep the realm in peace.<sup>549</sup>

The categorization of the “Schism” in terms of social deviance instead of religious opposition permitted the departure from the traditional categorical intolerance. It even

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<sup>548</sup> Ibid., 85-86.

<sup>549</sup> Ibid., 89.

hypothetically allowed some sort of an independent existence for the “Schism.” Preserving the dominance of the official Orthodox Church, the state abandoned the principal goal of Peter I and his immediate heirs, namely, the quick eradication of the “schismatics.” Instead, it relied upon the power of “enlightening” by the Holy Spirit:

It is true that Her Majesty wholeheartedly wishes to lead you out from your delusions and unite you with the one flock of Christ’s faithful, not by severity and torment but through gentleness, exhortation and instruction. For Her Majesty knows that *no one can be coerced into the faith and that the conversion of heart is God’s duty*. Therefore, Her Majesty commands all spiritual pastors to seek to convert you not by austerity but through gentleness and evangelic spirit, as the Holy Apostles were converted. If the Holy Spirit will not touch your hearts and you wish to remain in your rigid thoughts, you indeed *will be left to God’s judgement*.<sup>550</sup>

The exhortation concluded that the absence of any sort of religious repression should eliminate the problem of self-immolation at its root. It inquired rhetorically of the “schismatics”: “Does not such Christian indulgence of our Great Sovereign bring you to your senses and remorse for your errors? Should you not admit that there is no reason for you to burn yourself up and destroy yourself?”<sup>551</sup>

### **The Tolerant Neglect of the “Schism”**

The state’s toleration of the “Schism” was not confined to legal and polemical discourses; it was accompanied with administrative changes. For example, the Schismatic Office (*Raskol'nich'ia kontora*), which had been created in 1722 to administer “schismatic” affairs,

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<sup>550</sup> Ibid., 83-84.

<sup>551</sup> Ibid., 84.

registration and taxes, was abolished in 1763. This decree reinforced the ideal of civil order by stressing that peasants, merchants, and others should be governed in accordance with their social ranks, not religious beliefs. Similarly, taxes levied on “schismatics” from then on would be administered in the same manner as any other state income.<sup>552</sup> In addition, in 1765 the Senate forbade ecclesiastical authorities to prosecute “schismatics” on their own.<sup>553</sup>

Catherine II herself not only proclaimed the general principles of tolerance in her *Instruction to the Legislative Commission* (1767), she also provided the Commission with her thoughts in regard to the “schismatics” specifically. In *The Instruction of the Directive Commission to All the Special Commissions* (*Nastavlenie Direktsionnoi komissii vsem chastnym komissiiam*) (1768) she wrote:

The Schism is not the sole reason for [peasants] running away and therefore for the decrease in population, but also the decrees and laws issued in relation to it... Even though the very foundation of the Schism is mindless and laughable, for some there is greed for property and deceit, and for others ignorance and superstition, to motivate [them] to run away or to burn themselves to death, and excessive persecution can also lead to such extremes. If civil law is arranged in a way that its whole goal is directed solely at the civil ranks of citizens, while spiritual authorities act in accordance with the principles of the love of fellow men, even if there is no hope of achieving complete like-mindedness, at least the evils described above will be avoided.<sup>554</sup>

In accordance with the same logic, the popular earlier terms such as “false teachers” (*lzheuchiteli*) and “schismatic teachers” (*raskol'nich'i uchitelia*) or “schismatic priests”

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<sup>552</sup> PSZ, t. 16, no. 11989 (December 15, 1763. Manifesto on the reorganization of the government), 466.

<sup>553</sup> PSPR, t. 1 (1762-1772), no. 278 (December 22, 1765. On the non-establishment of “schismatic” commissions without the Senate’s approval), 320.

<sup>554</sup> Cited by: Riazhev, “*Prosveshchennyi absolutizm*” i staroobriadtsy, t. 2: 128-129. See also the 1767 letter of Catherine II to her close associate among Synodal members Metropolitan of Novgorod Dimitrii (Sechenov) expressing a similar opinion on the “schismatic” problem: “Pis'mo k mitropolitu Novgorodskomu Dmitriiu Sechenovu” (May 22, 1767), in *Russkii arkhiv. Istoriko-literaurnyi sbornik*, no. 1 (1866), 55-58.

(*raskol'nich'i popy*) disappeared from the state decrees. Words “hypocrites” (*khanzhi*), “vagabonds” (*brodiagi*) or “runaways” (*begletsy*) took their place.<sup>555</sup>

The official approval of the cemetery of *Fedoseevtsy* Old Believers in Moscow in 1771 represents an even more interesting case. Because the plague epidemic led to a massive death rate among city dwellers, the Senate called for Muscovites to help the government in coping.<sup>556</sup> A group of Moscow merchants and townspeople of other ranks, all “registered in the double poll tax” answered the call by requesting permission from the authorities to build a hospital on the city’s edge, near the village Preobrazhenskoe, at their own expense.<sup>557</sup> Permission was granted, and as a result the most important *Fedoseevtsy* spiritual center for years to come appeared. Nowhere in the documents directly discussing the permit did the words “Schism” or “schismatics” appear; instead only the reference to the “double poll tax” reveals the addition to the stated ranks in the social hierarchy. This downplaying of the “Schism” in the bureaucratic language apparently aligned with the replacement of religiously-defined categories in favor of civil ranks.

The new tolerant outlook on the “Schism” did not mean that it became a separate confession, as the plan in Peter III’s manifesto assumed. Such radical tolerance could not be allowed by the church hierarchy of the time. Nor were “schismatics” vested with any legal rights or protection. Yet, it was a compromise that revealed the essence of religious tolerance in “the age of the enlightenment”: the state withdrew from using force in religious conversion, leaving it to

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<sup>555</sup> See, for example: *PSZ*, t. 20, no. 14372 (September 29, 1775. On rejecting accommodations to hypocrites and vagabonds), 210-212; *PSPR*, t. 2 (1773-1784), no. 807 (October 21, 1775. Senate notice on the runaways and monks returning from abroad), 135. Catherine II personally also preferred the term “vagabond” to the rather polemical “schismatic monk”: “Pis'ma i reskripty Ekateriny II-i k moskovskim glavnokomanduiushchim. IV: K P.D. Eropkinu” (January 31, 1789), in *Russkii arkhiv*, no. 2 (1872), 320.

<sup>556</sup> “Akty, vypisannye iz del Pravitel'stvuiushchego Senata, kasaiushchiesia osnovaniia v Moskve Preobrazhenskogo kladbishcha v 1771 g.,” in N.I. Popov, *Sbornik dlia istorii staroobriadchestva*, t. 1 (Moscow: v Universitetskoi tipografii, 1864-1866), 74.

<sup>557</sup> *Ibid.*, 75-78.

the deity and the effectiveness of the official Church's proselytization; at the same time, the authorities ridiculed the "Schism" as a display of utter "ignorance," excusable only because of the absence of proper education. Not surprisingly, the government coined no new words to express its new agenda,<sup>558</sup> since the agenda itself consisted of silent neglect. This became especially apparent in the following decades. Only initiative from below gave rise to new words and consequently a new situation—that of confessional separation.<sup>559</sup>

The silence about the "Schism" in state-produced documents did not mean that the society as a whole turned a blind eye to it. Society regarded the "Schism" as a serious problem. Not only the aforementioned Melissino, but also the renowned historian Mikhail Shcherbatov in 1776-1777 and the chief procurator of the Ruling Senate Aleksandr Viazemskii in 1784 submitted their plans to Catherine II to finally eradicate the "schismatics."<sup>560</sup> At the same time, other members of society held the view that the "Schism" might disappear on its own in the very near future under pressure from the universal "enlightenment" (*prosveshchenie* in Russian).<sup>561</sup> Catherine II was more cautious about the prognosis, yet she was very optimistic about the power of education, too.<sup>562</sup>

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<sup>558</sup> The term "old ritualists" (*staroobriadtsy*), according to popular belief originated in the beginning of 1760s (see, for example: *Staroobriadchesto: Litsa, sobytiia, predmety i simvol'y: Opyt entsyklopedicheskogo slovaria*, ed. by S.G. Vurgaft, I.A. Ushakov (Moscow: Tserkov', 1996), 102; Irina Paert, "'Two or Twenty Million?' The Languages of Official Statistics and Religious Dissent in Imperial Russia," *Ab Imperio*, 3 (2006), 81. As following chapter demonstrates, this view is mistaken.

<sup>559</sup> See chapter 2.

<sup>560</sup> M.M. Shcherbatov, "Statistika v rassuzhdenii Rossii," in *Sochineniia kniazia M.M. Shcherbatova*, t. 1 (St. Petersburg: Tovarishchestvo "Pechatnia S.P. Iakovleva," 1896), 548-557; A.S. Riazhev, "Neizvestnye proekty russkogo "prosveshchennogo absoliutizma" po delam religii," *Otechestvennaia istoriia*, 2 (2004), 145-146.

<sup>561</sup> Tsapina, "'Smekha dostoinie pozorishche'?" 207-256

<sup>562</sup> "All of the Schisms will cease to exist in 60 years; as soon as public schools will be established and will get roots, ignorance will perish by itself, there is no need for coercion in this matter." *Pamiatnye zapiski A.V. Khrapovitskogo, stats-sekretaria imperatritsy Ekaterinu Vtoroi* (Moscow: Universitetskaia tipografiia, 1862), 4 (July 18, 1782). This phrase did not refer to the people known as "schismatics" in the state and church discourses but rather to all Christian beliefs Catherine II deemed unreasonable, including Freemasonry.

## The Abolition of the “Schism”

The logic of the enlightened neglect of religious categorization had one significant flaw in regard to the “schismatics.” They were the only ones who paid a special tax intended as a penalty for their religious deviance. Therefore, even though the religious deviance of, for example, the Moscow merchants who wished to build a hospital in 1771, was not mentioned in the documents, it was implied by the reference to the “double poll tax.”<sup>563</sup> The resolution of this problem came in 1782 in the context of a new, fourth census of the population, announced in November 1781. The manifesto declaring the census proclaimed: “everyone should be entered into the register according to his own status (*sostoianie*).”<sup>564</sup> The Senate decree clarifying the manifesto also included the following rule: “State peasants, including crown, economic and other ranks, as well as Tatars, Mordvins, Cheremis, Votiaks and people of any other descent or law, in a word, whatever ranks people have in any district or *uezd*,” should not be “differentiated into many special designations;” instead, they should be registered under the rank (*zvanie*) of state peasants.<sup>565</sup>

Even though neither the manifesto nor the subsequent Senate decrees announced the new registration for “schismatics,” word about the new census spurred many people to assume that it would contain a “schismatic” rank and they strove to identify themselves that way. So, in Spring 1782 in Viatka province, the delegates of a group of peasants brought to the provincial capital a pile of the “scraps of paper with the names on them” listing persons who wished to become “schismatics.” Following the order of the Viatka treasury officer, the local clerk recorded them on

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<sup>563</sup> In 1778 Catherine II resolved the question whether to levy Little Russian “schismatic” peasants becoming merchants with the double “schismatic” tax in a similar manner: they should be treated just as any other merchant in the empire. She commanded to “treat merchant schismatics in Little Russia according to Article 47 of our March 17, 1775 ukase, as it directs about all Russian merchants.” *RGADA*, f. 248 (The Ruling Senate and its offices), op. 49, d. 4226 (The case by the report of Count Petr Rumiantsev-Zadunaiskii in regard to Little Russian “schismatic” peasants, 1778), l. 103.

<sup>564</sup> *PSZ*, t. 21, no. 15278 (November 16, 1781. Manifesto on the organization of the new census in the empire), 306.

<sup>565</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 15296 (December 10, 1781. Senate decree on the regulations in regard to forms for census lists), 345-346.



the list-register, which the delegates, in their turn, officially submitted to the treasury.<sup>566</sup> Similarly, in the same year many Siberian peasants revealed a desire to become “schismatics” officially, since there was “an *ukase* that allowed registering [in the double poll tax].”<sup>567</sup>

In this context, in July 1782 the empress issued a decree that finally abolished the special tax on “schismatics.” The wording of this law is especially interesting. First of all, in accordance with the aforementioned logic of tolerance, the term “schismatic” was not mentioned in the decree at all. Instead it noted that the double poll tax no longer existed: “[We] most graciously command that from this time forward, no double poll tax should be collected to our treasury from town and country folk, neither should they pay it; each of them should pay to our treasury only those duties that are levied on them based on their rank (*sostoianie*).”<sup>568</sup> Just a few months later, the Senate had to explain the decree upon the request of the Senate's chief prosecutor Aleksandr Viazemskii. The problem was that the officials of the treasury of Polotsk province were confused whether the decree on the “double poll tax” applied to “schismatics” or not, and asked local procurator’s opinion. The latter answered in the affirmative, yet requested the chief procurator’s approval. The Senate resolution was straightforward this time: the decree “only applies to the inhabitants who are known under the name of ‘schismatics’.”<sup>569</sup> The Senate distributed this interpretation to all of imperial

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<sup>566</sup> See the interrogation testimonies of the peasants who wished to register as “schismatics” and the delegates themselves, Nolinsk district peasants Savva Belykh and Eremai Perminov: *GAKO*, f. 583, op. 3, d. 174 (The case of the “schismatics” Feofil and Savva Ivanovy, 1783), ll. 4 ob.-5 ob.; *Ibid.*, d. 1153 (The case of peasant Chulkin resisting to his childrens’ baptism, 1783-1784), l. 4.

<sup>567</sup> Cited by: Pokrovskii, *Krest’ianskii antimonarkhicheskii protest*, 366. The governor-general of the joint Perm and Tobol’sk province made known in the same report to the Senate that some of the peasants of the Ialutorovsk district are “seeking persistently to be registered in the Schism.” The cause of such a strange request was a widespread rumor that “the law has been issued that allowed the Orthodox to be registered in the Schism again.” The last word, “again,” apparently referred to the 1764-1765 count of “schismatics,” which officially was the last opportunity to gain this peculiar religious as well as tax status. There were up to 1,800 Tobol’sk province peasants ready to sign up into the non-existent category. Some unidentified number of peasants from one more district, Shadrinsk, were ready to join them, too: *Sobranie postanovlenii po chasti raskola, sostoiavshikhsia po vedomstvu Sviateishago Sinoda*, t. 1 (St. Petersburg: Tipografiia Ministerstva Vnutrennikh Del, 1860), 710-711, 716 (March 6/7 1783).

<sup>568</sup> *PSZ*, t. 21, no. 15473 (July 20, 1782. On the abolishment of the double poll tax), 634.

<sup>569</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 15581 (November 8, 1782, Senate decree on the announcement that the abolishment of the double poll tax applies to “schismatics” only), 745.

provinces.<sup>570</sup>

The abolition of the double poll tax revealed an inconsistency in the interpretation of the intention of the state policy among its recipients and executors. Some representatives of the state, as well as church authorities, inferred conflicting meanings concerning the double poll tax and its termination that led to real disagreement on the course of action. For example, at the beginning of 1783, Evgenii Kashkin (1737-1796), governor-general of the newly created Perm' and Tobol'sk province, complained to the Senate about ecclesiastical officials of Tobol'sk eparchy.<sup>571</sup> He reported that they tried to coerce forcibly former double poll tax payers into the official Church: they claimed that the abolition of the tax also meant that from now they were obligated to attend their parish churches and partake in the sacraments. In other words, the clergy interpreted the abolition of the double poll tax as equivalent to the abolition of the "Schism" itself! Not surprisingly, their action spurred turmoil among the former double poll tax payers as well as among "faithful" parishioners.<sup>572</sup>

Governor-general Kashkin strongly opposed the clergy's interpretation and sent to his civil subordinates in Perm' and Tobol'sk an "opinion," which he also submitted to the Senate for approval. Kashkin explained the abolition of the double poll tax in a way consistent with the developments of "schismatic" policy over the previous decade and a half—that is, neglecting the religious in favor of the civil. He wrote:

[the 1782 decree] commands not to exact double duties from those registered in the

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<sup>570</sup> Viatka province authorities received the decree on December 5<sup>th</sup> of the same year: *GAKO*, f. 583, op. 2, d. 1290 ("The case of the decree received from the Senate in regard to the exclusion of peasants known as "schismatics" from the double poll tax," 1782-1783), ll. 1-1 ob.

<sup>571</sup> For a very detailed description of Kashkin's activities in Perm' and Tobolsk, including "schismatic" affairs see: N.N. Kashkin, *Rodoslovnye razvedki*, t. 2 (St. Petersburg: otpechatano na sredstva N.S. Kashkina, 1913), 349-415.

<sup>572</sup> *Sobranie postanovlenii po chasti raskola, sostoiavshikhsia po vedomstvu Sviateishago Sinoda*, t. 1 (St-Petersburg: Tipografiia Ministerstva vnutrennikh del, 1860), 713, 721-722 (March 6/7, 1783).

Schism, therefore this statute annuls forever the section in the poll tax books dedicated to the collection from schismatics; that is why the designation of schismatic does not exist anywhere anymore, either in the [poll tax] books, or in census lists, or in any other registers; instead everyone is registered by his rank: a merchant with merchants, a townsman with townsfolk, a craftsman in the guild, a peasant with peasantry, not distinguishing at all who and according to which rules [he] obeys the Christ's law and doctrines of the Holy Church.<sup>573</sup>

In the spirit of the more radical Enlightenment toleration, the governor-general further explained that “secular authorities should not interfere in the distinction between the citizens who are considered faithful and the ones who are in error.” Their only duty, wrote Kashkin, is to impose compliance with the law.<sup>574</sup> The ecclesiastical authorities should be subject to the same principles. He found it necessary to explain to them how they should “govern their flock,” so “our Savior’s law would shine brighter and brighter in Christian hearts.” The ones who err should be led “to the right path” “not by punishment and persecution” but “through humility, patience, and diligent instruction.”<sup>575</sup> The Senate accepted Kashkin’s arguments “with particular pleasure” (*s obozryem udovol'stvem*) as an illustration of the principles the highest imperial officials embraced.<sup>576</sup> They did not necessarily hold any sympathy towards “schismatics” *per se*, but they concurred with ruling the empire by reason and perseverance. Needless to say, Governor-general Kashkin was not a champion of Siberian “schismatics” by any means either; he characterized them as “ignoramus” (*nevezhdy*). Only time could cure them, the governor-general argued in his letter of November 19, 1783 to Bishop Varlaam of Tobol'sk. The “schismatics” will be redeemed of their ignorance as a result of the “imperceptibly advancing public enlightenment” (*obshchestvennoe prosveshchenie*)

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<sup>573</sup> Ibid., 712.

<sup>574</sup> Ibid., 712.

<sup>575</sup> Ibid., 713.

<sup>576</sup> Ibid., 718.

in combination with “gentle and sensible instruction by church teachers,” explained Kashkin.<sup>577</sup> Such optimism was certainly widespread among educated Russians in the second half of the eighteenth century.<sup>578</sup>

The Senate immediately asked the Synod to redirect Governor-general Kashkin’s proposals to the bishop of Tobol’sk and his subordinates. The Synod did so with one interesting addition: it forbade the use of the word “schismatic” altogether, not only in official documents but even in discourse. It stressed: “the designation of schismatic should not be used either in the confession lists and sheets or any other registers, or in verbal conversations.”<sup>579</sup>

It is important to note that some Russian peasants also interpreted the law in an unexpected way. The rumors about the abolition of the double poll tax spread to different parts of the Russian empire. However, as Bishop Lavrentii (Baranovich) of Viatka complained in 1784 to the Chief Procurator of the Senate Aleksandr Viazemskii, some people in his flock interpreted the abolition of the double poll tax “falsely” (*krivo tolkuiut*). Specifically, they claimed that this law “gave everyone the liberty to believe as they wish.”<sup>580</sup> The bishop was obviously scandalized by such a radical conclusion; however, it was a logical end of the enlightened ideas of toleration. The practice of state governance in the Russian empire was ambivalent in this regard for it accommodated both positions.

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<sup>577</sup> Cited by: Kashkin, *Rodoslovnye razvedki*, 407-408.

<sup>578</sup> Tsapina, ““Smekha dostoinie pozorishche’?” 207-256.

<sup>579</sup> Ibid., 719. See also the same command to the bishop of Tobol’sk published in the Synodal records: “Ukaz Tobol’skomu arkhieieiu o raskol’nikakh” (March 9, 1783), in *ChOIDR*, no. 2 (1862), 140-143. Kashkin’s report and his actions towards “schismatics” are analyzed in full, albeit in a negative way, in: Pokrovskii, *Krest’ianskii antimonarkhicheskii protest*, 365-386. In addition, see the collection of documents of the last two decades of the eighteenth century from the Cheliabinsk spiritual office (*dukhovnoe pravlenie*) that was part of the Tobol’sk eparchy: *Cheliabinskaia starina, ch. 4: Dokumenty Cheliabinskogo dukhovnogo pravleniia poslednei chetverti XVIII veka, sodержashchie svedeniia o staroobriadtsakh Cheliabinskoi okrugi*, ed. by E.N. Sukhina (Cheliabinsk: n.p. 2005).

<sup>580</sup> *RGIA*, f. 796 (Holy Synod’s office), op. 65, d. 379 (The case based on the secret report of Viatka bishop Lavrentii about “schismatics” in Viatka eparchy, 1784), l. 5 (Bishop Lavrentii’s letter to the chief prosecutor of the Ruling Senate, October 28, 1784).

### **Bishop Lavrentii of Viatka and “*Staroknizhniki*”**

Neither the decree on the end of the double poll tax, nor any Senate and Synod orders that followed proposed an alternative to the term “schismatic,” now consigned to oblivion. They did not clarify if former “schismatics” should be distinguished in any way from the “faithful” parishioners of the official Church. However, the ban on the signifier did not eliminate the signified, as the ecclesiastical elite realized. For example, Kashkin’s contemporary and colleague Bishop Lavrentii (Baranovich) (c. 1738-1796) of Viatka and Great Perm wrote to the Senate’s Chief Procurator Aleksandr Viazemskii in October 1784, and did not use words “Schism” or “schismatic” even once, yet his letter unmistakably concerned them. Lavrentii did not have to use allegorical language; instead, he found another, more formal way to enunciate, yet avoid the “Schism”: he mocked the self-identification of some of the so-called “schismatic” groups with the old printed books and old rituals using the word “*staroknizhniki*” (old books adherents, or old books people). Therefore, Lavrentii followed the letter of Synod’s command, yet clearly showed his enmity towards the phenomenon he described.

The letter had a fascinating story behind it. In May 1784 Viatka civil authorities sentenced a group of peasants from Nolinsk district, namely Filimon, Artamon, Mikhailo and Andrei Vetoshkiny, Emel’ian and Ivan Chulkiny, and Petr Kutergin to severe punishment. The charges were based on a series of complaints from parish priests that these peasants were “schismatics” and “unlawfully” refused to bring their children for the sacraments of baptism and communion in the official Church. According to local secular officials, these “schismatics” violated a whole array of laws, including conversion from the official Orthodoxy to another “faith” and the spread of

“schismatic deception” among family members as well as other official Orthodox believers.<sup>581</sup> At first, the provincial office ordered them to sign a statement pledging to abide by the law in the future. When they refused to do so, the sentence enacted in Peter the Great’s legislation—still in use in Catherine II’s time, despite its severity—was handed down: stubborn parents were consigned to the penal servitude after flogging and having their nostrils slit.<sup>582</sup> Local priests informed the authorities that the person responsible for the spread of “schismatic ravings” (*raskol’nicheskie bredni*) in their parishes was the peasant Ivan Shmakov from the same Nolinsk district.<sup>583</sup> Even though Shmakov himself escaped prosecution, his role in this case had a profound effect on the fate not only of the Vetoshkins, the Chulkins and Kutergin, but also on the way Viatka secular authorities started to deal with the alarming clerical reports about the “Schism.” Shmakov obtained some of the case documents from Filimon Vetoshkin; the civil prosecutor handed the investigation report of Filimon’s unlawful deeds to Filimon himself and ordered him to bring it to the court in the village of Nolinsk, and Filimon fled to Kazan instead and passed the documents to Ivan Shmakov. Shmakov, on his turn, went to St. Petersburg in order to petition the empress herself to intervene in what he thought was the unlawful persecution of his co-believers.<sup>584</sup> Shmakov’s mission turned out to be successful. The empress became personally interested in this case and

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<sup>581</sup> *GAKO*, f. 583, op. 1a, d. 859 (The case of “schismatics” from Nolinsk district Emel’ian Chulkin and Filimon Vetoshkin, 1781-1782); *Ibid.*, op. 4, d. 241 (The case of “schismatic” Vetoshkin, 1784), ll. 6-7. The conversion from the official Orthodoxy to any other denomination was prohibited both by laws by Peter I and Catherine II: *PSZ*, t. 6 (1720-1722), no. 3987 (April 29, 1722. About the ones who abandon Orthodoxy), 667; *Ustav blagochiniia ili politseiskoi* (St. Petersburg, 1782), 16 (Article 243: Any Orthodox [believer] converted to another faith should be arrested and sent for trial). Besides, the direct ban on the spread of the “Schism” among family members with the order to baptize children of “schismatics” in the official Church were included in the extensive 1722 decree that resulted from a joint conference of the Holy Synod and Ruling Senate: *PSPR*, t. 2 (1722), no. 721 (July 16, 1722. The articles from Synod’s and Senate’s joint conference about “schismatics”). 410.

<sup>582</sup> The sentence can be found here: *GAKO*, f. 583, op. 4, d. 241 (The case of “schismatic” Vetoshkin, 1784), ll. 6-7. See also the investigation: *Ibid.*, op. 2, d. 1373 (The case of “schismatic” Ivan Chulkin, 1782); *Ibid.*, op. 3, d. 1153 (The case of “schismatic” Moisei Chulkin, 1783).

<sup>583</sup> *GAKO*, f. 583, op. 1a, d. 859, l. 1.

<sup>584</sup> *GAKO*, f. 583, op. 4, d. 61 (The case of “blasphemy” by peasant Kondratii Posnikov, 1784-1788), l. 18 (Ivan Shmakov’s petition to the general-governor of Viatka prince Platon Meshcherskii, February 10, 1788)

ordered the Senate's Chief Procurator Aleksandr Viazemskii to ask the Viatka bishop to respond to Shmakov's allegations. It is not surprising that Bishop Lavrentii referred to Ivan Shmakov numerous times throughout the letter, while denying any wrongdoings on his own part or that of his subordinates. Instead, Lavrentii denounced Shmakov as self-proclaimed priest and a "deceiver" of the righteous flock.<sup>585</sup>

Chief Procurator Aleksandr Viazemskii notified Bishop Lavrentii in a letter that "the merciful sovereign wishes there were no persecution and bad treatment of *these people* for any reason." The phrase "these people" referred to the formula used in the petition Shmakov submitted to the empress: peasants abiding by the "old printed books and old church rituals" (*posledovanie imi staropechatnym knigam i starym obriadam tserkovnym*).<sup>586</sup> The letter did not contain the term "schismatic" (*raskol'nik*) at all. Most likely, this usage was intentional: the chief procurator simply followed the repetitive style of bureaucratic documents, but at the same time he revealed an enlightened tolerance towards the "so-called" old books and rituals.<sup>587</sup>

Reluctant to acknowledge any sort of wrongdoing on the part of the Viatka clergy, Bishop Lavrentii found a way to circumvent the ban on the key words. He used the word "*staroknizhniki*" which literally means "old books people," which had a negative connotation.<sup>588</sup> First of all, it created a denigrating term out of the phrase Shmakov had used to refer to his co-religionists, adherents of the "old printed books and old church rituals." To an educated Orthodox reader, the term "*staroknizhniki*" recalled the Biblical reference to the Pharisees. The Church Slavonic version of the Gospel of Mathew pairs "*knizhniki*" ("scribes" in King James version of the Bible) with

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<sup>585</sup> *RGIA*, f. 796, op. 65, d. 379, ll. 3 ob.-5 ob. (Bishop Lavrentii's letter to Aleksandr Viazemskii, October 28, 1784)

<sup>586</sup> *Ibid.*, ll. 2-2 ob. (Aleksandr Viazemskii's letter to Lavrentii, bishop of Viatka, September 17, 1784)

<sup>587</sup> Aleksandr Viazemskii himself was invested in the problem of the "Schism." In May 1784, just several months before the letter to Lavrentii of Viatka, he submitted to Catherine II a project on how to solve the problem. He did in fact use only the term "schismatics" in it. See the full description of Viazemskii's project: Riazhev, "Neizvestnye proekty russkogo 'prosveshchennogo absoliutizma,'" 145-146.

<sup>588</sup> *RGIA*, f. 796, op. 65, d. 379, l. 4 and others (Bishop Lavrentii's letter to Aleksandr Viazemskii, October 28, 1784)

“*farisei*” (“Pharisees”), whom Jesus Christ accuses of hypocrisy. Matthew was particularly negative:

Woe to you, scribes (*knizhniki*) and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men’s bones and all uncleanness. Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness. (Matthew 23:27-28)<sup>589</sup>

Lavrentii simply added “staro-” (old-) in order to create a mocking effect, attributing hypocrisy to the reverence for the old books.

Lavrentii’s word “*staroknizhniki*” was not an additional derogatory term, but rather a direct replacement for “schismatics.” So, he complied with the policy prohibiting use of the term, yet kept the discursive construction around it. Further, the bishop listed two types of “*staroknizhniki*” – “registered” (*zapisnye*) and “unregistered” (*nezapisnye*)--in other words, the ones who used to pay the double poll tax before its abolition in 1782 and the ones who avoided it via different stratagems. The word combination “registered *staroknizhnik*” is an oxymoron; the category of “*staroknizhnik*” did not exist in state law for someone to be registered into. Lavrentii simply substituted “schismatics” with “*staroknizhniki*” with no further adjustment.

Lavrentii’s choice of the word “*staroknizhniki*” also aligned well with the common ecclesiastical as well as secular anti-“schismatic” discourses, which from the beginning of the eighteenth century emphasized the motifs of “ignorance” and “simplicity.” On the one hand, reference to biblical scribes implied meticulous knowledge of books, yet both the Biblical authors

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<sup>589</sup> The Russian version of the Scripture referenced here is the so-called “Elizabethan translation” of the Bible first published in 1751. The accusations of hypocrisy towards the opponents of the new books appeared in the polemical discourse against “schismatics” already in the seventeenth century. For example, one of the treatises against the participants of the disputation about the faith during the Moscow rebellion of 1682, printed the next year in the name of Patriarch Ioakim, charged “apostates” and “church schismatics” of the time with “temptation, lying, and hypocrisy” (*lest’, lukavstvo i litsemerie*). The author cited the verses 27 and 28 of the Gospel of Matthew in support of the accusation. *Slovo blagodarstvennoe ob izbavlenii tserkvi ot odstupnikov*, ff. 66-67.



and Lavrentii characterized it as empty knowledge: “full of dead men’s bones,” as the Gospel of Matthew put it. Lavrentii similarly contrasted “true Orthodoxy” with the hollow “sophistry” of the “*staroknizhniki*.”<sup>590</sup> The bishop found “the extreme ignorance” of the “*staroknizhniki*” especially threatening, because “ignorance” characterized not only the “*staroknizhniki*” themselves, but also the members of the official Orthodox Church flock. Lavrentii’s parishioners, Viatka inhabitants, were in danger of falling for the “*staroknizhniki*’s” “depraved teaching” because of their “utter simplicity.”<sup>591</sup>

Lavrentii did not portray the problem as hopeless, however. He admitted in the same manner as the Perm secular governor Evgenii Kashkin that the “extreme ignorance” of populace was already being overcome by the progress of “a nationwide enlightenment,” which he attributed diplomatically to “Her Imperial Majesty’s maternal care.”<sup>592</sup> Yet, until the complete triumph of “enlightenment” in Russia, Lavrentii claimed it necessary to restrain the “*staroknizhniki*.” He presented an elaborate plan intended to completely annihilate them. This plan, which he called “regulations” (*rasporiadok*), occupied a substantial part of his letter to Viazemskii.<sup>593</sup>

Lavrentii’s proposals aligned very well with the enlightened mindset of the era, yet they were seemingly very radical for a church hierarch. Just like Platon (Levshin) or Gavriil (Petrov), discussed above, Lavrentii was a representative of Russian religious Enlightenment that managed to combine religious tenets with commitment to reason and state interests.<sup>594</sup> First, he proposed to discredit the appeal of the “*staroknizhniki*”—their perceived adherence to the old-printed books. This measure was inspired by two books among those confiscated from local “*staroknizhniki*”:

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<sup>590</sup> *RGLA*, f. 796, op. 65, d. 379, l. 5.

<sup>591</sup> *Ibid.*, ll. 5-5 ob.

<sup>592</sup> *Ibid.*, l. 5 ob.

<sup>593</sup> *Ibid.*, ll. 5 ob.-7.

<sup>594</sup> For more on the religious Enlightenment in eighteenth-century Russia see: Wirschafter, *Religion and Enlightenment in Catherinian Russia*.

*Tsvetnik* (which literally means “flower garden”) and *Christ’s Passion*.<sup>595</sup> The bishop found so many overt “absurdities” (*neleposti*) and “malignant gossip” (*zlosloviia*) in these books that he proposed to print them verbatim with a short didactic introduction and distribute copies to priests in problematic bishoprics. His goal was evidently to reveal the folly of the opponents: “the ignorance and falsehood of the *staroknizhniki*’s claim to adhere to the old printed books will become apparent to all Orthodox Christians.”<sup>596</sup> At the same time, Lavrentii argued, the state should strictly restrain “*staroknizhniki*” from copying or owning handwritten books such as ones just mentioned, while allowing them to own freely any pre-Nikonian printed books, “up until the time of universal enlightenment” (*do vremiani vseobshchago prosveshcheniia*).

The bishop justified the exception for pre-Nikonian printed books because “the power and reason of the church teaching is the same in the old printed books,” as in the ones published after Nikon. He added that old printed books should also be sent to eparchial churches for polemical purposes.<sup>597</sup> Lavrentii was not the first churchman to admit the legitimacy of the old printed books; for example, Platon Levshin stressed it also in his exhortation.<sup>598</sup> Yet, when Lavrentii proposed to grant “*staroknizhniki*” the right to realize the insignificance of the difference between new and old books on their own, he demonstrated trust in the exclusive power of human reason and “enlightenment” that was quite rare among church hierarchs.

Bishop Lavrentii thought that the “*staroknizhniki*” could learn to understand the real essence of Orthodoxy through proper schooling in Russian and Slavonic grammar, accompanied by the study of the old printed catechism. He proposed the catechism composed by Metropolitan

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<sup>595</sup> Works entitled “*Tsvetnik*” can comprise almost any compilation of ecclesiastical texts, while “*Christ’s passion*” is a semi-apocryphal text about Jesus Christ’s life and death well-known and widely circulated in Russia in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. See more about the latter in: G.M. Prokhorov, “*Strasti Khristovy*,” in *SKKDR*, vyp. 3 (XVII v.), ch. 3 (1998), 506-508.

<sup>596</sup> *RGIA*, f. 796, op. 65, d. 379, ll. 4 ob., 5 ob.-6.

<sup>597</sup> *Ibid.*, ll. 6-6 ob.

<sup>598</sup> Platon (Levshin), mitr., “*Uveshchanie k raskol’nikam*,” 3-118.

of Kiev Petro Mohyla (1596-1646) and originally published first time in 1645 as most suitable for admirers of old books.<sup>599</sup> Lavrentii had a plan for how to get “*staroknizhniki*” into schools: making organized communities of “*staroknizhniki*” cover the expenses. The bishop apparently drew his model for the organization from the official Church:

it seems to me that it is necessary to appoint some of their own people, [the ones who are] sensible and literate, to be overseers just like principals appointed in the eparchies [of the official church]; those supervisors would keep the lists of *staroknizhniki* under their supervision, how many of them, in what ranks and status, including hermits, all of whom it would not be bad seemingly to place into cenobitic life (*obshchezhitel'stvo*) until the time of universal enlightenment and appoint capable superiors for them in accordance with monastic tradition. All of these superiors and supervisors would have close oversight over their subordinates and provide proper account of all the affairs related to faith to the governing body that Her Imperial Majesty would assign for their supervision.<sup>600</sup>

As it becomes apparent, Lavrentii's plan in fact involved the official establishment of a confessional body uniting all Russian “*staroknizhniki*” separate from the official Church. Of course, the bishop did not have the creation of a distinct confession as his goal; he regarded these provisions as temporary, relying the reforming power of “enlightenment” to rapidly eliminate any need for them. It is not surprising in this light that he called local “*staroknizhniki*” “the rivals (*soperniki*) of the Orthodox Church,” thus vesting them discursively with the legitimacy equal (though opposite) to official Orthodoxy.<sup>601</sup>

Surprisingly, Lavrentii did not specify who would govern the “*staroknizhniki*” organized according to his plan, leaving it up to the empress to decide. In other words, he did not presume

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<sup>599</sup> *RGIA*, f. 796, op. 65, d. 379, ll. 6, 7.

<sup>600</sup> *Ibid.*, ll. 6 ob.-7.

<sup>601</sup> *Ibid.*, l. 6.

that the Holy Synod was the only option. Perhaps Lavrentii anticipated the creation of a structure similar to the ones established soon after for the followers of Judaism (1787) and for Muslims (1788). The Holy Synod had nothing to do with governing those bodies.<sup>602</sup> Notwithstanding his intentions, Lavrentii's plan is indicative of the era in its infeasibility: he relied upon an abstract category of "schismatic" constructed in secular and ecclesiastical law under the influence of religious polemics, rather than on first-hand experience of diverse body of groups and divisions associated with it. Such "enlightened" eradication of the "Schism" had the same chances for success as Peter I's measures of "schismatics" registration and fiscal burden.

## Conclusion

Lavrentii's plan was too radical to be implemented, and it is unclear whether he himself really hoped that it could be realized, or was merely speculating in accordance with the enlightened tolerance of his era. The 1760s discussions about the fate of "schismatics" in Catherine II's Russia demonstrated the fundamental aversion of church hierarchs to the essential change in "schismatic" status that Peter III's manifesto had proposed. The hierarchs' mindset did not change significantly in the subsequent decades, in 1780s and 1790s. Even such "enlightened" and courtly churchmen as Metropolitans Platon (Levshin) and Gavriil (Petrov) expressed disagreement with any sort of confessional separation for "schismatics."<sup>603</sup>

A decade later, the plan of "*edinoverie*," realized under the direct oversight of Platon and

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<sup>602</sup> The so-called "foreign faiths" received formal governing institutions incorporated into imperial administration later: the Spiritual Muslim Assembly was formed in Ufa at the end of 1780s, while the institutionalization of other confessions was even later. About this process see: Alan W. Fisher, "Enlightened Despotism and Islam Under Catherine II," *Slavic Review*, vol. 27, no. 4 (1968), 542-553; Crews, *For Prophet and Tsar*, 31-60; Werth, *The Tsar's Foreign Faiths*, 48-57.

<sup>603</sup> Both Platon (Levshin) and Gavriil (Petrov) expressed utter disagreement with any sort of compromise with the dissenters. N.V. Lysogorskii, *Moskovskii mitropolit Platon Levshin, kak protivoraskol'nichii deiatel'* (Rostov-na-Donu: elektro-pechatnia A.I. Ter-Abramian, 1905), 465-467; N.N. Subbotin, *K istorii Rogozhskogo kladbishcha* (Moscow: Tipografiia M.N. Lavrova i Ko, 1882), 19-21.

Gavriil and legally approved in 1801, would attempt to represent some sort of compromise. It provided the “*edinovertsy*” with lawful clergy and an opportunity to read the liturgy and perform the sacraments and other rituals using the old printed books, but still within in the boundaries of the official Church and under the direct supervision of the eparchial hierarchs.<sup>604</sup> Still, the objective of those hierarchs was the complete eradication of the “Schism” as a phenomenon: so from their perspective “*edinoverie*” was less of a compromise with the dissenters and more a pathway to full integration into the official Church.

Still, Lavrentii's plan made sense. Despite the intentions of clerics and state officials, the development of the language about the “Schism” and “schismatics” from the beginning of the century created a space to imagine the possibility for such a plan. The concepts of the “Schism” and “schismatic” acquired the meaning of unity and autonomy from the official Church. The concept of “schismatic,” derisively replaced with “*staroknizhniki*” in Lavrentii’s letter, carried the same set of characteristics in ecclesiastical as well as secular discourses: the two fingered sign of the cross, attachment to old printed books, rejection of the Eucharist, and, most importantly, hostility towards ecclesiastical as well as secular authorities. As a result, all of the people stigmatized as “schismatics” automatically became part of a united movement threatening the Russian Church and state, in a word, *the* “Schism.” That assessment of “schismatics” created the possibility to imagine them as a “faith” or “law,” even if a “wrong” one. Meanwhile, the rise of the idea of religious toleration could facilitate its separation into an autonomous movement implicitly recognized as such by the state and the official Russian Orthodox Church. The appearance of the notion of “*staroobriadchestvo*,” discussed in the next chapter, brought the

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<sup>604</sup> See more on the “*edinoverie*” and its major documents: R.V. Kaurkin, O.A. Pavlova, *Edinoverie v Rossii (ot zarozhdeniia idei do nachala XX veka)* (St. Petersburg: Aleteiia, 2011), esp. 185-192.

development of the concepts of “Schism” and “schismatics” in the second half of the eighteenth century to a logical end.

## CHAPTER II. The Quest for the “*Staroobriadchestvo*”

“*Staroobriadchestvo*” literally means “old ritualism.” Just like the term “Old Belief” in the English-speaking world, the term “*staroobriadchestvo*” is a primary term in Russian-speaking academia to describe the whole range of events and ideas from Patriarch Nikon and Archpriest Avvakum to today’s Russian Orthodox Old Ritualist Church as a unified phenomenon. However, aside from the fact that the term emerged not earlier than the 1780s, the concept of “*Old Ritualism*” was rooted in a very particular historical setting. Specifically, it arose amidst the atmosphere of enlightened toleration on the part of the highest state officials and aimed to provide a group of South Russian so-called “schismatics” with an official confessional status. Yet, other dissident groups labeled by the state and church officials as “schismatics” soon employed the term “*old ritualism*” for the advancement of their own interests. This chapter demonstrates how this neologism, which appeared accidentally, became a full-bodied concept that the state and church authorities as well as different dissident groups simultaneously utilized in their own agendas.

The appearance of the “old ritualism” was directly connected to the activities of two “schismatic” hegumens from Starodub’e region (Malorossiiia province, or Little Russia): Nikodim of the Uspenskii monastery and Mikhail (Kalmyk) of the Pokrovskii monastery. The region of Starodub’e lay at the very border of the Russian empire with the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. The opponents of the liturgical reforms of Patriarch Nikon settled there in the last decades of the seventeenth - beginning of the eighteenth centuries. Another place of escape - the Vetka region settlements-was located just across the Polish border at the junction of rivers Soz (Polish Soż) and Vetka. Very soon these two areas became the most important centers of the priestly Old Belief.<sup>605</sup>

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<sup>605</sup> About the Starodub’e and Vetka centers see: Ivan Alekseev, *Istoriia o begstvuiushchem sviashchenstve* (Moscow: Arkheodoksiia, 2005); Andrei (Ioannov), *Polnoe istoricheskoe izvestie*, ch. 3-4; M.I. Lileev, *Novye materialy dlia*

Both Starodub'e and Vetka attracted runaway "schismatics" from all over the country and therefore immediately became the focal point of governmental concerns. Nonetheless, the two areas had very different fates: Starodub'e became an important frontier territory and, therefore, imperial officials treated it with caution; while the Vetka region was looked upon as a constant threat to the empire's economic well-being because it served as a refuge for many Russian peasants and merchants, prosecuted in the Russian empire or simply dissatisfied with their life there. "Not the defense [of the empire], but rather enmity is to be expected from those schismatics," asserted the 1735 Senate report in regard to the Vetka region inhabitants.<sup>606</sup> As a result, the region had gone through several devastating Russian military assaults, particularly in 1735 and 1764. At the beginning of 1770s, as soon as the Russian empire incorporated the Vetka-river area into its own territory during the first partition of Poland (1772), the Old Believer center was completely devastated.<sup>607</sup>

It is necessary to stress that Vetka and Starodub'e owed their important status for many of the so-called "schismatics" not only to their remote geographical location, which limited the authorities' ability to persecute them, but also to the fact that it became a sacred site on an imperial scale. In 1695 spiritual leaders of the Vetka settlement consecrated a church in the name of the Intercession of the Mother of God (*Pokrova Bogoroditsy*, therefore Pokrovskaia church). Soon a

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*istorii raskola na Vetke i v Starodub'e XVII-XVIII vv.* (Kiev: Tipografiia G.T. Korchak-Novitskogo, 1893); Idem., *Iz istorii raskola na Vetke*.

<sup>606</sup> PSZ, t. 9, no. 6802 (September 4, 1735. Senate report on the resettlement of "schismatics" forced out of the Vetka region), 574. For more on Vetka as a problematic border region see in: Akel'ev, "Politika rossiiskogo pravitel'stva," 183-194.

<sup>607</sup> The official (legal) beginning of the so-called "Raskol'nic'h'i slobody" of Starodub'e can be counted from the resolution of Peter I on the articles presented by the Kiev region governor in February 1715. PSZ, t. 5, no. 2889 (February 18, 1715), 149-150. See also Golitsyn's order based on Peter's resolution cited in: A. Lazarevskii, *Opisanie staroi Malorossii. Materialy dlia istorii zaseleniia, zemlevladieniia i upravleniia*, t. 1 (Kiev: Tipografiia K.M. Malevskago, 1888), 443. On the devastation of the Vetka settlements see: Lileev, *Iz istorii raskola na Vetke i v Starodub'e*; Riazhev, "Prosveshchennyi absolutizm" i staroobriadtsy; Akel'ev, "Politika rossiiskogo pravitel'stva," 183-194.



monastery of the same name appeared near the church. The church and monastery became an Old Believer spiritual center renowned throughout Russia.<sup>608</sup> In 1764, during the second Russian military assault (2<sup>nd</sup> “*vygonka*” in the language of the sources) on the Vetka area, the Pokrovskaia church and monastery were relocated to the village Klimova in Starodub’e. With them preeminence in spiritual authority also shifted.<sup>609</sup> It now attracted pilgrims and visitors; as *The Chronicle of the Vetka Church (Letopis' Vetkovskoi Tserkvi)* (1779-1784) noted, people were coming to the Pokrovskii monastery “from all of Russian as well as Little Russian lands, especially from the Don and Kazan, of all ranks and of both genders, and all of them rejoice jointly and greatly.”<sup>610</sup>

Hegumen Mikhail, also known by the nickname “Kalmyk,” became one of the recognized leaders of the priestly Old Believer communities connected to Starodub’e and Vetka in the 1760s. As the head of the Pokrovskii monastery, he maintained his authority for decades until his death at the end of the eighteenth century.<sup>611</sup> Nikodim joined the monastery in the 1770’s and soon gained influence there, too.<sup>612</sup> The story of both of these churchmen is well known and widely discussed in scholarly literature in the context of the so-called “Council on Rechrismation”

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<sup>608</sup> See, for example, answers 35-40, 126-127 of the so-called “*Kerzhentskie otvety*” created by the Vyg fathers for their Kerzhenets region fellows. About the Pokrovskaia church and monastery see: Lileev, *Iz istorii raskola na Vetke i v Starodub’e*, 182-187. The church was destroyed by accident and storm in 1735 during an attempt to relocate it to Starodub’e. It was rebuilt in 1758 (*Ibid.*, 301-302, 365).

<sup>609</sup> Andrei (Ioannov), *Polnoe istoricheskoe izvestie*, ch. 4: 60-63; Lileev, *Iz istorii raskola na Vetke i v Starodub’e*, 396-397.

<sup>610</sup> Cited by: V.Z. Belolikhov, *Inok Nikodim Starodubskii (Ego zhizn' i literaturnaia deiatel'nost)* (Kiev: Tipografiia Aktsionernogo Obshchestva “Petr Barskii v Kieve,” 1915), 60. The dating of *The Chronicle of the Vetka Church* is based on its starting and ending dated 1779 and 1784 respectively. For more about that work see in: Idem., “Iakov Stefanov Beliaev,” in *Trudy Imperatorskoi Kievskoi Dukhovnoi Akademii* (henceforth – *TIKDA*), 12 (1914), 420-469, esp. 453-457.

<sup>611</sup> Mikhail Kalmyk’s biography is mostly unknown. His lay name was Matvei. By 1750 he already was a priest of the official Church in Astrakhan’ eparchy. However, in 1752, after the death of his wife and a short period of residence in the Spaso-Preobrazhenskii monastery, Matvei fled to the Pokrovskii monastery in Vetka region, where he took monastic vows under the name of Mikhail. Hence, he became a hieromonk, or a monk-priest. In 1763 Mikhail relocated to the village Zybkaia in Starodub’e and headed the Pokrovskii monastery, having moved there from the Vetka region. For the details of Mikhail’s life see: Lileev, *Novye materialy dlia istorii raskola*, 246-247.

<sup>612</sup> On Nikodim see: Andrei (Ioannov), *Polnoe istoricheskoe izvestie*, ch. 4:95, 109-121 (The letter of Iakov Beliaev, August 1<sup>st</sup> 1789); Belolikhov, *Inok Nikodim Starodubskii*; Lileev, *Iz istorii raskola na Vetke i v Starodub’e*, 365-367.

(“*Peremazanskii sobor*”). This Council of priestly Old Believers gathered in Moscow in 1779-1780 to decide how to accept clergy from the official Russian Orthodox Church. The problem was of highest importance and directly concerned canon law. In accordance with Eastern Orthodox tradition the ordination of clergy is an exclusive right and responsibility of church prelates. Priestly Old Believers lacked a hierarchy that could claim verified descent from the Apostles, and therefore could not generate clergy by themselves. Instead, they converted runaway churchmen from the official Russian Orthodox Church as a temporary solution until they could gain their own hierarchy. These conversions raised a serious canonical problem, though. Since priestly Old Believers considered the official Church to be fallen into the “Nikonian heresy,” the question of the preservation of the grace of orders in the converts was inescapable. Canon law, particularly the resolutions of ecumenical as well as local councils in regard to numerous ancient heresies, offered three types of conversions: (re)baptism, anointing with the Holy Chrism, and penance. Canon law was clear that the performance of the first, repeated baptism, without doubt terminated the holy order of the convert. It did not have an explicit answer about the two other ways, though, and, therefore was open to interpretation. The leaders of the Moscow Rogozhskoe cemetery insisted on the combination of anointing with Holy Chrism and penance as the only satisfactory way to accept clergy from the “Nikonian heresy.” They even prepared their own Holy Chrism and insisted that the grace would be intact if the accepted cleric was anointed with it before repenting. The representatives of Starodub’e, Mikhail Kalmyk and the monk Nikodim, argued for the illegitimacy of the prepared chrism and asserted the sufficiency of the third rite of conversion, namely penance, combined with simple rejection of the heresy.<sup>613</sup>

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<sup>613</sup> On the discussion with Moscow Old Believers see especially: “Skazanie o peremazanskom sobore 1779-1780 gg.,” in *Bratskoe Slovo*, no. 2 (1888), 5-22, 85-106, 167-186, 263-278; Popov, *Sbornik dlia istorii staroobriadchestva*, t. 1: 177-317; Andrei (Ioannov), *Polnoe istoricheskoe izvestie*, 47- 78 (O peremazanavshchine, ili ob Iorzhentsakh). See also; Belolikov, *Inok Nikodim Starodubskii*, 59-210.

The debate concerning the Council resulted in a split in the priestly community over the question of priests' conversion. Mikhail and Nikodim maintained their views and soon turned to what would become known as early "*edinoverie*," that is the Old Believers' unification with the official Russian Orthodox Church with the proviso that they could keep the old rites.<sup>614</sup> Nikodim became the main advocate for the communities supporting him to unite with the official Church under the authority of a specially appointed hierarch. However, the importance of his affairs is mostly overlooked. That is because the history of "*edinoverie*" is usually examined as part of the general history of the Russian Orthodox Church and its unruly offspring, the Old Belief, rather than within the history of confessional policies of Russian empire. Recently, Andrei Riazhev inscribed the Nikodim's activities into a wider framework of the ideology of religious toleration in Catherine II's Russia in his meticulous study of the attitudes of Russian "enlightened absolutism" towards the Old Believers.<sup>615</sup>

### **Monk Nikodim and the Story of His Request**

Platon Levshin's exhortation published in 1765 invited "schismatics" to approach either the Church's "spiritual government" or any other pastors if they had any doubt about the official Church or its rituals. The Church would treat such requests with care and attention, the document promised.<sup>616</sup> In the beginning of the 1780s, a decade and a half after the first publication of the exhortation, Hegumen Nikodim and his fellows cited this promise directly, asking the Holy Synod and two of its most influential members, namely Metropolitans Gavriil (1730-1801) of Novgorod

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<sup>614</sup> "Kem i kak polozheno nachalo Edinoveriiu v Russkoi tserkvi," *Bratskoe slovo*, no. 2 (1892), 108-138; P.S. Smirnov, "Istoricheskii ocherk edinoveriia," *Vera i razum*, no. 12 (1893); V.I. Zhmakin, "Nachalo edinoveriia (1780-1796)," in *Khristianskoe chtenie*, no. 12 (1900), 979-1004; N.N. Subbotin, *O edinoverii (po povodu ego stoletnego iubileia)* (Moscow: Bratstvo Sv. Petra, mitropolita, 1901); Kaurkin and Pavlova, *Edinoverie v Rossii*, 54-64; and others.

<sup>615</sup> "*Prosveshchennyi absoliutizm*" i staroobriadtsy, t. 2: 272-317.

<sup>616</sup> Platon (Levshin), "Uveshchanie k raskol'nikam," 72.

and St. Petersburg and Platon (1737-1812) of Moscow, to review their wish to unite with the official Church.<sup>617</sup> At the same time, Hegumen Nikodim contacted several powerful Russian statesmen, including the governor of Little Russia (*Malorossiiia*) Count Petr Rumiantsev (1725-1796) and the governor of New Russia (*Novorossiiia*) Prince Grigorii Potemkin (1739-1791), seeking assistance in their cause. Nikodim's request set the scene for a centuries-long use of the concepts of "old ritualists" (*staroobriadtsy*) and "Old Ritualism" (*staroobriadchestvo*) in official and popular discourses.

In the summer of 1781, the delegation of the Pokrovskii and Uspenskii monasteries led by Hegumens Mikhail and Nikodim met with Petr Rumiantsev at his residence in the village Vishenki (in today's Chernigovskaia oblast' of Ukraine) to discuss the possibility of obtaining a lawful hierarchy for their community from the official church. Rumiantsev approved such an attempt and promised the hegumens his full support.<sup>618</sup> Later, in September 1781, Nikodim and his fellows sent the monk Gerasim from Starodub'e to St. Petersburg with letters to Metropolitan Gavriil and Prince Grigorii Potemkin. The request, as it was formulated in the letter to Gavriil, inquired:

how could we initiate a request to the Holy Synod, so that it would review in a fatherly manner the very desperate state of thousands of souls, many of which certainly wish to have a divinely instituted hierarchical order, and make a merciful decision for us to be under the shepherding of an archpastor, so that we could

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<sup>617</sup> "Letter of Hegumen Nikodim to Metropolitan Platon, December 8, 1783," in T. Verkhovskii, *Iskanie glagolemymi staroobriadtsami v XVIII veke arkhieieistva* (St. Petersburg: Pechatnia V. Golovina, 1868), 6-7, 20. Verkhovskii's book is essentially an annotated publication of the collection of correspondence about the attempt to obtain a lawful hierarchy that took place in Starodub'e. The publication deserves archeographic criticism (presumably, it was edited to meet mid-nineteenth-century grammatical standards); however, it is trustworthy in general. Therefore, when available, documents are cited by the original copies preserved in RGADA; in most other cases I relied on Verkhovskii's publication.

<sup>618</sup> "Letter of Hegumen Nikodim to Count Rumiantsev, March 20, 1783," in Verkhovskii, *Iskanie glagolemymi staroobriadtsami*, 10. See also: *Ibid.*, 3.

maintain the rites by the old printed books of the ancient Greek-Russian Church and so that the censure and anathema on those rites would be recalled.<sup>619</sup>

This letter and the letter to Potemkin asked the addressees for assistance in getting a lawful church hierarchy from the Holy Synod with the condition of preserving the old rites and the old printed books. Although the letters were identical in essence, their argumentation varied significantly and clearly demonstrate the authors' strategies to succeed.<sup>620</sup> The letter to the metropolitan of Novgorod stressed the merits Gavriil would gain for his assistance in the leading "many to salvation." Nikodim also alluded to the metropolitan's pastoral likeness to the Great Shepherd, Jesus Christ himself.<sup>621</sup> Similarly, in the letter to Potemkin Nikodim stressed the merit his "mercy" would accrue in the afterlife. Nikodim also pointed to the resemblance Prince Potemkin in his "mercy" had to Christ's apostles spreading the Gospel.<sup>622</sup> Such evangelical similes are not surprising considering Nikodim's spiritual vocation and the nature of his request.

However, the letter to Governor Potemkin included a section that was likely to appeal to the high-ranking imperial administrator. Specifically, Nikodim suggested that his request concerned not only a relatively small group of his co-believers in Starodub'e, but was also of imperial significance: should the Synod fulfill the request, thousands of dissidents such as Nikodim from the entire "holy All-Russian empire," would submit to the authority of the appointed hierarchy. In other words, Nikodim's plan could finally eradicate the "Schism" as a phenomenon - the goal

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<sup>619</sup> "Letter of Hegumen Nikodim to Metropolitan Gavriil, September 10, 1781," in Verkhovskii, *Iskanie glagolemymi staroobriadtsami*, 6. See also this letter published in: Ioann Cherednikov, "Delo inoka Nikodima," in *Chernigovskie eparkhial'nye izvestiia*, 17 (1909), Pribavlenie, 649-651.

<sup>620</sup> Nikodim was the nominal as well as actual author of these and following letters and petitions; yet, since the recovery of the lawful hierarchy for the Church was of high importance for many people, Pokrovskii and Uspenskii monasteries' brethren together with selected laymen edited them collectively. On the process of the editing see: Belolikov, *Inok Nikodim*, 260-261, 283-284, and others.

<sup>621</sup> "Letter of Hegumen Nikodim to Metropolitan Gavriil, September 10, 1781," in Verkhovskii, *Iskanie glagolemymi staroobriadtsami*, 7.

<sup>622</sup> "Letter of Hegumen Nikodim to Prince Potemkin, September 10, 1781," in *Ibid.*, 8.

that all the “anti-schismatic” legislation since the beginning of the eighteenth century aimed to achieve for the sake of the internal stability of the empire. Clearly, Nikodim understood well that his request had far-reaching ecclesiastical as well as civil significance. Hence, the letter implied that the inclusion of the adherents of the old printed books within the official Church’s flock was indeed a question of the well-being of Russian empire, rather than just a problem of ecclesiastical deviation.

It is also important to note that the formula Nikodim chose to identify himself and his fellows was long and complicated: adherents of the “rites of the ancient Greek-Russian Church as [manifested] in the old printed books” (*drevle-grekorossiiskii tserkvi chinosoderzhaniia po staropechatnym knigam*). This definition pointed to their belonging to the only true Church – Russian Orthodox Church, however the pre-Nikonian one. Such self-definition was not a novelty for some groups.<sup>623</sup> Yet, the predominant way of self-identification for many groups, including the Rogozhskoe center and the Vetka region, was different: they preferred to talk about themselves as Orthodox Christians, the Christian society, the Orthodox Church, or simply the Church.<sup>624</sup>

### **The Inception of “Old Ritualism”**

The neologism “Old Ritualism” (*staroobriad(o)chestvo*) came into existence at the beginning of the 1780s. It is impossible to say with absolute confidence when exactly it appeared and who coined it; it is certain, however, that “Old Ritualism” made its way into official documents

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<sup>623</sup> See, for example, the 1760 letter of Vetka region monks asking to settle in Starodub’e in: Lileev, *Novye materialy dlia istorii raskola*, 205, 207, 210. See also: Popov, *Sbornik dlia istorii staroobriadchestva*, t. 1: 203, 205, 209, 210, 213. See also in Nikodim’s own works related to the Moscow Council of 1779-1780. He addressed his opponents with a similar formula: Nikodim, “Kniga o mirovarenii,” in Belolikov, *Inok Nikodim*, 5 (appendix).

<sup>624</sup> See, for example, the self-definition “Moscow Christian society” (*moskovskoe khristianskoe obshchestvo*) in: “V slobody, Moskovskoe poslanie, ot vseh sobrannykh, 1779,” in Popov, *Sbornik dlia istorii staroobriadchestva*, t. 1: 243. See also: *Ibid.*, 253. The self-identification as “Orthodox Christians” (*khristiane pravoslavnyi*): Nikodim, “Kniga o mirovarenii,” in Belolikov, *Inok Nikodim*, prilozhenie, 12.

of the imperial government by means of Nikodim's letters and petitions.<sup>625</sup> So, in a letter to Rumiantsev from March 1783 Nikodim, praising Rumiantsev's apostle-like deeds, used the formula "in accordance with the *old ritualism* of the ancient Church as [manifested] in the old printed books" (*po staropechatnym knigam drevne-tserkovnago staroobriadchestva*) and "the society of the adherents of old ritualism" (*obshchestvo staroobriadchestva soderzhatelei*).<sup>626</sup> In April 1783, during his personal meeting with Prince Grigorii Potemkin, Nikodim expressed a formal wish to unite with the official Church "under the [condition of] old ritualism" (*pri staroobriadochestve*).<sup>627</sup> His petition consisted of twelve conditions, which can be reduced to several main points. First, the anathema on the two-fingered sign of the cross and other old rites should be renounced.<sup>628</sup> Second, the Holy Synod should appoint a special hierarch who would practice church services and ordain clerics in accordance with the old rites. Third, anyone in Little Russia as well as in Great Russia who "adhered to old ritualism" (*priderzhashchikhsia staroobriadochestva*) should be under his formal authority.<sup>629</sup> In other words, Nikodim proposed to create a subdivision inside of the Russian Orthodox Church that would have own hierarchy and would incorporate all of Nikodim's co-believers. It would basically be a quasi-eparchy that extended throughout the whole empire.

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<sup>625</sup> Additional support for the conclusion that the concept appeared not earlier than 1783 can be found in the letters and polemical works of the Vetka and Rogozhskoe cemetery fathers dedicated to internal debates and to argumentation against the official church, which apparently did not contain any mention of the concept of "staroobriadchestvo." See, for example, the works mentioned in footnote 18. In addition, see the letters and works of Nikodim in the appendix to Belolikov, *Inok Nikodim*, 3-59 (appendix), and the *Articles (Statii)* of monk Nikodim addressed in 1781 to the metropolitan of Novgorod and St. Petersburg Gavriil together with the petition previously mentioned: *Rossiiskaia gosudarstvennaia biblioteka* (henceforth - RGB), f. 556, no. 12 (manuscript titled "Otvety Nikodimovy," copy dated to 1786). See also: "Skazanie o peremazanskom sobore 1779-1780 gg.," in *Bratskoe slovo*, no. 2 (1888).

<sup>626</sup> "Letter of Hegumen Nikodim to Count Rumiantsev, March 20, 1783," in Verkhovskii, *Iskanie glagolemymi staroobriadtsami*, 10.

<sup>627</sup> Nikodim's letter to Prince Potemkin, April 28, 1784. *RGADA*, f. 18, op. 1, d. 306, ll. 10-15. See also the copy of 12 articles dated to February 26, 1784 with Potemkin's comments in the margins: *Ibid.*, ll. 3-6 ob. (published in: *ChOIDR*, no. 4 (1860), 288-290). About the meeting see: Belolikov, *Inok Nikodim*, 292.

<sup>628</sup> The use of pre-Nikonian church practices was anathematized during 1654 and 1666 church Councils. The renunciation of the anathema took place only in 1971.

<sup>629</sup> Nikodim's petition to Prince Potemkin, April 28, 1784. *RGADA*, f. 18, op. 1, d. 306, l. 13.

Nikodim's petition used the term "Old Ritualism" (*staroobriadchestvo*) numerous times and elaborated on the meaning of the word:

to conduct God's service, such as vespers, matins, liturgy and other church services according to the old printed books, which were printed in the regnant city of Moscow by the order of ... the autocrat of all Russia Aleksei Mikhailovich and by the blessing of the most holy Patriarch Iosif, without violating the rites manifested in them and the use of two fingers in the blessing as well as in the sign of the cross and St. John Damascenes' church singing with eight tones, and other old ritualism.<sup>630</sup>

Therefore, Nikodim's "Old Ritualism" (*staroobriadchestvo*) did not actually imply the existence of an "-ism," that is, a movement, confession, system of beliefs, or a comprehensive religious phenomenon, as might be implied in the English translation - "Old Ritualism." Rather, it referred to what "Old Ritualism" literally meant - the practice of old rites, meaning the church rites assigned by the books printed prior to Nikon's ascension to the office of patriarch. Hence, this term was a noun in form, but an adjective in essence. Notably, the noun "old ritualist" (*staroobriadets*) did not appear immediately, and the verbal adjective "*staroobriadstvuiushchii*" (literally means "the one practicing old ritualism") was used instead.<sup>631</sup>

It took time for "*staroobriadchestvo*" to take root in the language about the "Schism" and turn into a full-bodied concept. However, Hegumen Nikodim laid the foundation for the subsequent success of the term by placing "*staroobriadchestvo*" into the context of the demand for confessional autonomy. The hegumen connected his request with the policies of religious toleration propagated by Catherine II's government, directly pointing to the fact that the empress

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<sup>630</sup> *Ibid.*, ll. 12 ob.-13.

<sup>631</sup> "Hieromonk Ioasaf's letter to Metropolitan Gavriil, November 12, 1784," in Verkovskii, *Iskanie glagolemymi staroobriadtsami*, 37-38. See also the "decision" (*prigovor*) of 1400 merchants and townsmen of Novgorod-Severskoe *namestnichestvo* to allow Hegumen Nikodim to represent them in search of reunification with the official church. Verkovskii, *Iskanie glagolemymi staroobriadtsami*, 14-16.



“allows the practice of many faiths dwelling in Russia.”<sup>632</sup> Therefore, Nikodim and his fellows obviously hoped to receive the fruits of toleration, too, “especially because” other faiths enjoyed the freedom of religious practice. In other words, unlike official Church hierarchs, Nikodim considered it to be logical to regard “adherents of the old ritualism” as a confession that should be accepted in an enlightened empire. Nikodim concluded the petition to Potemkin from April 1783 with the following passage:

Especially because our monarch being led by the spirit of evangelical gentleness allows the unimpeded practice of different faiths dwelling in Russia, we hope for magnanimous consideration since many thousands of people who are outside unity with the Holy Church, feeling such clemency, would give themselves forever and with the deepest allegiance under the shepherding of the most holy hierarchs of the ecumenical Church. *No traces should ever be remembered of the name the “Schism” and the existence of it, and of the mutual alienation.*<sup>633</sup>

In this passage Nikodim indirectly proposed to replace the “Schism” with the neologism “*old ritualism*,” consigning not only the reality but even the name to oblivion.

However, it was not enough for Nikodim to point out the implications of Enlightenment ideas for the status of his co-believers. He also stressed the benefits the empire would gain from the fulfillment of his request, that is, the increase of its population with the attraction of “endlessly loyal” subjects from abroad:

This would serve *the good of the fatherland by the attraction to Russia of its sons dispersed outside of the state*, to the immortal glory of the great Empress our mother, since it will be the fruit of her gentleness. We, on our side, should we

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<sup>632</sup> Compare the wording of the Nikodim’s letter to Article 62 of the “Code of Good Order” (April 8, 1782) (*Ustav blagochiniia ili Politseiskoi*, ch. 1 ([St. Petersburg]: [Senatskaia tipografiia], 1782), 5). See also article 494 in *The Instruction to the Legislative Commission* (1767): “In so vast an Empire which extends its Dominion over such a Variety of People, The prohibiting, or not tolerating their respective Religions would be an Evil very detrimental to the Peace and Security of its Subjects.” (*Nakaz eia imperatorskago velichstva*, 320)

<sup>633</sup> Nikodim’s petition to Prince Potemkin, April 28, 1783. *RGADA*, f. 18, op. 1, d. 306, ll. 14 ob.-15.

receive the unity in faith and the Eucharist of the Holy Spirit, would commit ourselves, each other, and our whole life to Christ God with endless loyalty and thanksgiving.<sup>634</sup>

The reference to Russia's "dispersed sons" shows that Nikodim was well aware of the imperial agenda of the day: the correlation between population and state prosperity was stressed over and over again in numerous Russian reorganization projects as well as in laws and manifestos, including the ones particularly concerned with the problem of Russian runaways to Polish lands.<sup>635</sup>

Nikodim's strategy did work. Of course, he was not able to attain all his initial goals, yet he was heard. The resolution Catherine II wrote on the petition Nikodim passed through Potemkin in February 1784 echoed the passage on the "good for the fatherland": the empress ordered Metropolitan Gavriil of St. Petersburg and Grigorii Potemkin to examine the petition jointly and "weigh it against spiritual and civil legislation and the state's good."<sup>636</sup> Surely, Nikodim found right words for right ears.

Andrei Riazhev pointed out recently that at the end of the eighteenth century Old Believers were able to "speak the same language" with the authorities; specifically "they knew well which buttons to press in order to be heard and, most importantly, to be understood."<sup>637</sup> The example of Nikodim certainly proves this observation; however, there is more to it. Nikodim's petitions and letters did not just usurp governmental discourse about religious tolerance; in the long run they altered the discourse itself. In other words, the term "staroobriadchestvo" that Nikodim introduced (unintentionally) at the beginning of 1780s soon accomplished what the authorities were not

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<sup>634</sup> Nikodim's petition to Prince Potemkin, April 28, 1783. *RGADA*, f. 18, op. 1, d. 306, l. 15.

<sup>635</sup> See, for example: *PSZ*, t. 16, no. 11720 (December 4, 1762), 126. See also the projects of Lomonosov, Panin, Shcherbatov and the place of "schismatic" problem in regard to their return to Russian empire.

<sup>636</sup> Nikodim's petition to Prince Potemkin, February 26, 1784. *RGADA*, f. 18, op. 1, d. 306, ll. 14 ob.-15. "The order of Catherine II to Metropolitan Gavriil and Prince Grigorii Potemkin, February 28, 1784," *RGADA*, f. 18, op. 1, d. 306, ll. 2-2 ob. See also: *Ekaterina II i G.A. Potemkin*, 753.

<sup>637</sup> Riazhev, "Prosveshchennyi absolutizm" i staroobriadtsy, t. 2: 200.

willing or able to proclaim out loud: the so-called “schismatics” in fact comprised a confessional entity that ought to enjoy the right to be tolerated equally with other “faiths.”

### **The “Old Ritualism’s” Good Fortune**

The term “Old Ritualism” started to penetrate into governmental discourse about the “Schism” almost immediately. First, it made its way from Nikodim’s petitions into the vocabulary of the one of the most powerful officials of the time, the Little Russia Governor Petr Rumiantsev.<sup>638</sup> Repeating the petitioners’ language, Rumiantsev informed the Synod and Senate that the monk Nikodim from the “society of the adherents of the old church rites” wished to unite with the official Church “under the [condition of] old ritualism” (*pri staroobriadnichestve*).<sup>639</sup> At the same time, the governor appropriated the term and started to use it outside of the immediate context of Nikodim’s petitions. So, in his official reports to the Senate and Synod dated October 1783, he referred to the Pokrovskii monastery as “*staroobriadnicheskii*.”<sup>640</sup> It is noteworthy since the hegumen of the monastery, Mikhail Kalmyk, Nikodim’s close ally and co-believer, in his request to Governor Rumiantsev to allow “the people here” (*zdeshee obshchestvo*) to build a stone church on the place of a wooden one, used neither “*staroobriadnichestvo*,” nor any other special terms in regard to himself, his monastery, or the people he represented.<sup>641</sup> This indicates that Rumiantsev understood the term as an adjective defining a specific set of religious practices, not just a curious neologism coined by Hegumen Nikodim.

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<sup>638</sup> Nikodim submitted a petition that listed the same 12 conditions to Rumiantsev in October 1783: Nikodim’s petition to Count Rumiantsev, October 19, 1783. *RGADA*, f. 18, op. 1, d. 306 (Correspondence of Count Potemkin with Hegumens Nikodim and Mikhail), ll. 21-24 ob.

<sup>639</sup> Rumiantsev’s report to the Holy Synod, October 28, 1783. *RGADA*, f. 248, op. 52, d. 4316 (no. 39, Reports of Count Rumiantsev-Zadunaiskii about Hegumen Mikhail and Nikodim’s petitions, December 5, 1783), l. 353.

<sup>640</sup> Rumiantsev’s report to the Governing Senate, October 28, 1783. *Ibid.*, ll. 349, 350.

<sup>641</sup> Hegumen Mikhail’s petition to Count Rumiantsev, August 24, 1783. *Ibid.*, ll. 351-351 ob.

From Rumiantsev's reports, Nikodim's neologism (in the form of "*staroobriadNichestvo*" not "*staroobriadOchestvo*," though) made its way into Senate documents. It was only used in the repetition of the Rumiantsev's reports (with the preservation of his exact words); however, while in the internal correspondence and in the title of the note based on these reports, the Senate clerks used the former label "schismatics."<sup>642</sup> The reason for it was quite obvious – the term "*Old Ritualism*" in any of its forms was not yet an accepted concept but an odd innovation without any legally defined meaning. Within a decade it would be used widely in both, regular and bureaucratic language.

New Russia Governor Potemkin also, just like Rumiantsev, was receptive to Nikodim's letters and their language. However, his idea of what the "good for the fatherland" meant did not align exactly with what Nikodim proposed. Nikodim suggested some long-term and hypothetical gains for the empire: should the Synod provide him and his co-believers with a lawful church hierarchy, many runaways *might* return to Russia, and the century-long problem of the "Schism" *might* be solved. The governor of New Russia province, whose territory increased in 1783 with the annexation of Crimea, expected immediate results, namely the settlement of returning as well as other "schismatics" on the territory of the newly acquired peninsula. Therefore, in accordance with Potemkin's plan, the bishop of the soon to be organized Crimean eparchy (called Tauride by the ancient Greek name of the peninsula) was supposed to guide "old ritualists" and appoint clergy for them.<sup>643</sup> In addition, although quite open and supportive of Nikodim's efforts,<sup>644</sup> Potemkin rejected the core idea of the request – appointing of a special hierarch for the "adherents of the

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<sup>642</sup> "The letter of the secretary [?] Fedor Golubtsov to ... [?], January 18, 1784," *Ibid.*, 359; "Report on the schismatics' demands, January 19, 1784," *Ibid.*, 360.

<sup>643</sup> No. 699. G.A. Potemkin – Ekaterine II. [Do 27 fevralia 1784 g.], in *Ekaterina II i G.A. Potemkin. Lichnaia perepiska 1769-1791*, ed. by V.S. Lopatin (Moscow: Nauka, 1997), 191-192.

<sup>644</sup> See the letter of Nikodim to his monastery from St. Petersburg in January 1784. "Nikodim's letter to the brethren of Uspenskii monastery, January 5, 1784," in Verkhovskii, *Iskanie glagolemymi staroobriadtsami*, 27.

church old ritualism” (*priderzhashchikhsia staroobriadochestva tserkovnogo*). Potemkin was concerned about the creation of a separate confessional entity out of “schismatics.” “It cannot be allowed because such a hierarch would be like an ecumenical patriarch,” wrote Potemkin in regard to article 6 of Nikodim’s conditions, which proposed to create an empire-wide super-bishopric specifically for the “adherents of the old ritualism” (*priderzhashchikhsia staroobriadochestva*).<sup>645</sup>

In the context of the discussion of Nikodim’s request, the new word “old ritualists” emerged in the documents of the highest imperial authorities. Potemkin and Gavriil’s joint opinion, which Catherine II requested in February 1784, did not fulfill Nikodim’s request for a special hierarch. However, they proposed a middle ground – to assign the communities of “old ritualists” (*staroobriadtsy*) to their eparchial bishops, who on their part would ordain clerics for them.<sup>646</sup>

Catherine the Great’s response to the opinion of Potemkin and Gavriil was very revealing concerning the problem of the “Schism” in the context of the enlightened toleration. She wrote to Potemkin:

I think that if I confirm this report, I will give cause for many similar petitions from schismatics, which might bring trouble for the Church: if schismatics gain such a privilege they would avoid the authority of local bishops and decide to be with the bishops of their choice; it would be impossible to avoid it; and all the schismatics in Russia having submitted to a single bishop; consequently, *they could gain the status of all other Christian confessions which are not of our faith*. This topic was always avoided in their regard, and until today no one wished to hear about it, clerics especially.<sup>647</sup>

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<sup>645</sup> Nikodim’s petition to Prince Potemkin, February 26, 1784. *RGADA*, f. 18, op. 1, d. 306, l. 5.

<sup>646</sup> “No. 701. G.A. Potemkin – Ekaterine II. [Do 11 marta 1784 g.],” in *Ekaterina II i G.A. Potemkin*, 192.

<sup>647</sup> No. 702. Ekaterina II – G.A. Potemkinu. [Do 11 marta 1784 g.], in *Ibid.*, 192.

Catherine II vividly stressed the problem of combining the dominance of the official Church and state imposed tolerance towards all other religious groups. Her choice was to compromise. As the empress wrote to Potemkin, she wished “the wolves to be satisfied and the sheep intact” and ordered him to solve this problem “without publicity and formal decree.”<sup>648</sup> In March 1784 Catherine II followed the opinion of Potemkin and Gavriil and ordered that the bishops of Mogilev and Slaviansk be informed of their new role of the shepherds of the “old ritualists” (*staroobriadtsy*) from Belorussia, Little Russia and Ekaterinoslav who wished to unite with the official church while retaining the old church rites.<sup>649</sup> Catherine II’s subsequent decision in August 1785 completely aligned with Potemkin’s pragmatic vision of Crimean settlement and development to the benefit of returning runaways: “To set the lands between Dnepr and Perekop for old ritualists to settle, so that they can receive priests from the bishop, assigned for the Tauride province, and attach to his eparchy their villages in Chernigov and Novgorod-Severskoe provinces, permitting all of them to hold services according to the old printed books.”<sup>650</sup> Catherine II added at the end of the decree that the news about such “freedoms” may also be declared publicly for “old ritualists dispersed outside of Our Empire’s bounds.”<sup>651</sup> Apparently, at this point the term “old ritualists” made its way into empress’s own lexicon, that is, into the empire’s most authoritative language.

Therefore, the term “old ritualism” started to acquire universal meaning at an early stage. The highest authorities including the empress herself adopted the language of Nikodim’s petitions and started to use the term “old ritualists” as an alternative to “schismatics.” The final decision of Catherine II to assign “old ritualists” to the authority of local bishops instead of granting them a

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<sup>648</sup> Ibid..

<sup>649</sup> Verkhovskii, *Iskanie glagolemymi staroobriadtsami*, 28-29. This decree was issued sometime before March 9, not March 11, as noted in the abovementioned letters, since the letter of Potemkin to Gavriil referencing the decree followed on March 9, 1784. “Iz bumag mitropolita Novgorodskago i S.-Peterburgskago Gavriil,” in *Russkii arkhiv*, no. 10 (1869), 1601 (Letter of Prince Potemkin to Metropolitan Gavriil, March 9, 1784).

<sup>650</sup> PSZ, t. 22, no. 16239 (August 13, 1785), 439.

<sup>651</sup> Ibid.

separate hierarchy was a compromise that could not fully satisfy either Nikodim and his fellows, nor the official church hierarchy. (Nikodim himself died in May 1784 and could not see the fruits of his efforts.) In other words, instead of a separate hierarchy directly subject to the Holy Synod and therefore an autonomous confessional status (as Nikodim's petition implied), petitioners received an opportunity to observe the full cycle of church services; however, they remained a pariah fragment within the unchanged structure of the official church. However, the introduction of the term "old ritualists," which soon turned into a full-bodied concept, did what the imperial authorities were reluctant to implement.

### **"Old Ritualism" After Nikodim**

Many of the so-called "schismatic" groups played the decisive role in the establishment of "Old Ritualism" as a concept, by adopting it themselves. They appealed to it as a manifestation of their confessional freedoms. "Old Ritualism" ultimately became a concept to identify a unified phenomenon, a separate faith expressed in the form of adherence to the old printed books. It replaced the term "Schism," yet it was more than the "Schism": "Old Ritualism" did not define its followers through what was wrong with them in comparison to the official Church ways - a set of erroneous practices that constituted a belonging to the "Schism." Instead, "Old Ritualism" described a belief system connected to certain types of practices. Hence, even though the official church hierarchy and subsequently the civil government opposed the creation of a separate confession ("faith," *khristianskoe ispovedanie*) under the name of "Old Ritualism," it happened unintentionally through a shift in the language about the "Schism." It was not the nature of the new term itself that caused the shift, but the term's inception in a very specific context of the enlightened tolerance.

The news about the seeming success of Nikodim's mission spread around the country. Thus, in February 1786, Grigorii Novotelkov, a Mologa (Iaroslavl' province) merchant converted from the "Schism," informed his associate Aleksei Syromiatnikov, a St. Petersburg merchant and an official Orthodox activist, about a curious "hearsay" that appeared in his home town. The rumor was that the empress ordered the Holy Synod to "give schismatics a bishop and priests to conduct services according to the old printed books and by their rites, and it is said those [bishop and priests] have already been assigned and sent to them with great glory."<sup>652</sup> Apparently, the rumor originated from Catherine II's order to Potemkin from August 1785. However, Mologa "schismatics" apparently exaggerated the success of Nikodim's quest, since the order said nothing about a designated bishop for "schismatics." They obviously read into the story what they wished to hear.<sup>653</sup>

Not surprisingly, the partial "freedoms" promised to "old ritualists" in Catherine II's order to Potemkin gave birth to contested interpretations, and also to "secret" decrees allegedly given by the empress. For example, the decree that was found in 1786 at the house of the peasant Mikhail Malein in Kovrov district (Vladimir province) expressed Catherine II's dissatisfaction with the church hierarchs who caused "old ritualists" "serious oppressions," namely forcing them to attend the official Church, partake in its sacraments, and use three fingers in the sign of the cross. It commanded the Holy Synod to restrain from such practices and leave the oppressed "free" (*ostavit' im na voliu*) based on the puzzling fact that "old believers" (*starovertsy*) "are in fact *ammosony*"

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<sup>652</sup> "Grigorii Novotelkov's letter to Aleksei Syromiatnikov, February 10, 1786," in E.E. Lebedev, *Edinoverie v protivodeistvii russkomu obriadovomu raskolu* (Novgorod: Parovaia tipografiia M.O. Selivanova, 1904), 16 (Prilozheniia).

<sup>653</sup> See similar ways to perceive official documents among Russian peasants in the second half of the nineteenth century: Field, *Rebels in the Name of the Tsar*; L'vov, *Sokha i piatiknizhie*.



(*oni zhe sut' ammosony*).<sup>654</sup> In 1788 authorities discovered another version of the same decree in Moscow province at the house of the peasant Filipp Matveev. The compiler of this forged decree apparently synonymized the term “old ritualists” (*staroobriadtsy*) with the self-description of many “schismatic” groups – “old believers” (*starovertsy*), that shows the appropriation of the term in the wider circles. Plus, this version of the forged decree stated that “freedom” for “*starovertsy*” is guaranteed by the fact that they “are in fact *not ammosony*” (*ibo oni ne sut' ammosony*).<sup>655</sup> The conflicting statements about “*ammosony*” are especially curious. This word originated from an actual law regarding Freemasonry, highly popular in Russia at the time. The creators of the forgeries obviously did not understand what the word “Mason” meant and why it was connected to the freedom to practice of the old rites.

The concept of “Old Ritualism” spread together with the news about Nikodim’s achievement. Thus, in June 1786 elders of the (priestly) “schismatic” Anufriev hermitage on the shore of the White Sea (Arkhangel’sk eparchy) in the far north of Russia, petitioned the local bishop Veniamin to allow them to build a church dedicated to the Holy Trinity. They asked the hierarch to appoint the certain hieromonk David to it, so he can consecrate the church “in accordance with old ritualism” (*po staroobriadchestvu*) and perform services according to the old books. Hermitage elders backed their request referring to Nikodim’s petition and the empress’s permission to be registered “under the name of Old Ritualism (*staroobriadchestvo*)” and receive clergy from local bishops.<sup>656</sup>

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<sup>654</sup> The secret case of Holy Synod, July 5 1788, published in: Lebedev, *Edinoverie v protivodeistvii russkomu obriadovomu raskolu*, 10 (appendix).

<sup>655</sup> Zhmakin, “Nachalo edinoveriia (1780-1796),” 981 (footnote 2).

<sup>656</sup> The case of the Holy Synod in response to the petition of bishop of Arkhangel’sk Veniamin, June 23, 1786, in: Lebedev, *Edinoverie v protivodeistvii russkomu obriadovomu raskolu*, 10 (appendix).

In the 1790s even more petitions followed, also using the example of Nikodim and the supposed declaration of freedom of “faiths.” In April 1791 Cossacks of *Vol’skoe voisko* submitted a petition to Grigorii Potemkin. They asked to be allowed to build a church or at least a chapel and invite a priest from the Starodub’e or Irgiz area. It is noteworthy that the petition equated the term “Old Ritualism” with the “Schism.” “We, the lowest of all,” petition began, “being from [among those] registered ... in accordance with the supreme decree of 1764 in *the Schism*, which later was renamed *old ritualists*... experience an utmost need because we do not have a priest to perform rituals of Christian duty in accordance with our rite.”<sup>657</sup> In addition, the Cossacks referred to the words of their commander, Pavel Potemkin, that “neither of the faiths is being repressed anywhere in the realm of Catherine the Great.”<sup>658</sup> It is not important whether or not Pavel Potemkin really said this; rather, this incident demonstrates that the rays of enlightened tolerance reached ordinary people and they appealed to it to advance their own interests.<sup>659</sup>

Similarly, in 1793, a representative of about 9,000 “old ritualists” from the city of Verkhneudinsk (modern Ulan-Ude), Irkutsk province, petitioned the Holy Synod. Their request boiled down to having their own church and a priest, “who would set us on the right path and administer the holy sacraments in accordance with *Old Ritualism*.” They appealed to the example of their “brothers” from “Old Ritualist villages” in Kiev province and others.<sup>660</sup> The Synod asked the head of the Irkutsk eparchy, Bishop Veniamin, to persuade the petitioners to explain what they meant “by the name *Old Ritualism*” (*pod imenem staroobriadchestva*).<sup>661</sup> The reply of the

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<sup>657</sup> *RGADA*, f. 18, op. 1, d. 311, l. 2.

<sup>658</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>659</sup> See also the similar petition of Don Cossacks in: Titlinov, *Gavriil Petrov, mitropolit novgorodskii*, 931-932; N.V. Lysogorskii, *Edinoverie na Donu v XVIII i XIX vv. (po 1883 g.)* (Sergiev Posad: tipografiia Sviayto-Troitskoi Sergievoi lavry, 1915), 43-66, 72-82.

<sup>660</sup> Cited in: Titlinov, *Gavriil Petrov, mitropolit novgorodskii*, 927.

<sup>661</sup> *PSPR*, t. 3 (1785-1796), no. 1570 (October 6, 1793. The Synod secret instruction to the Irkutsk bishop and the general governor of the same region), 436-437.

petitioners was revealing: “By the name of Old Ritualism we mean the holding of the holy church service and other sacraments according to the books published” before Patriarch Nikon. And this time, they were even more precise concerning their source: “in accordance with old ritualist rite (*po staroobriadcheskomu obriadu*) as in *old ritualist* Starodub’e and other places”<sup>662</sup>

Petitions also followed from St. Petersburg, Tver’, Nizhnii Novgorod, Kazan, and other places, all fashioned in the same pattern.<sup>663</sup> Especially interesting were two petitions submitted by Moscow and St. Petersburg “*old ritualists*” to the general-governor of Moscow and the metropolitan of St. Petersburg respectively in 1792. These petitioners insisted on the resemblance of their confessional status to that of Lutherans and Catholics. They asked to be treated in accordance with the the same laws as for Lutherans and Catholics and be confessionally autonomous from the official Church.<sup>664</sup> The concept of “*old ritualism*” appeared to be proof of their right to make such a request and a tool to attain it.

### **“God, Let the Old Ritualism that Is Wise and Pleasant to All Come into Being”**

Not all of the so-called “schismatics” approved of Nikodim’s efforts to unite with the official Church. As the letter by Novotelkov mentioned above also stated, many “sects” regarded the news of the seeming success of his quest with suspicion, especially “rebaptizers” (*perekreshchivantsy*), or priestless Old Believers, who “call this a trap and deceit.”<sup>665</sup> Notwithstanding this well justified suspicion, the concept of “old ritualism” found very fertile soil

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<sup>662</sup> Cited in: Titlinov, *Gavriil Petrov, mitropolit novgorodskii*, 927. See also: *PSPR*, t. ? (1796-1801), no. 286 (October 18, 1798), 295-297.

<sup>663</sup> Titlinov, *Gavriil Petrov, mitropolit novgorodskii*, 938-946, 951-956 (Kazan, Nizhnii Novgorod). See also: *PSPR* t. ? (1796-1801), no. 189 (Nizhnii Novgorod petition), 252, 311, 367 (Tver’), 308 (St. Petersburg).

<sup>664</sup> Subbotin, *K istorii Rogozhskogo kladbishcha*, 20. In regard to the legal regulation of their religious practice “old ritualists” appealed to Articles 124-126 of *The City Statute* (*Gorodovoe polozhenie*) (1785) that granted freedom of faith to foreign confessions *Gorodovoe polozhenie* ([St. Petersburg]: Tipografiia Voennoi kollegii, [1785]), XIII.

<sup>665</sup> Grigorii Novotelkov’s letter to Aleksei Syromiatnikov, February 10, 1786, published in Lebedev, *Edinoverie v protivodeistvii russkomu obriadovomu raskolu*, 16-17.

even among persons who opposed the unification with the official church. Thus, the Vyg community leaders found it especially consonant with their agenda.

In July 1782 the governor of St. Petersburg Ustin Potapov informed the leader of the Vyg community Andrei Borisov about the abolition of the double poll tax for “schismatics.”<sup>666</sup> Andrei Denisov’s lengthy reply dated to October of the same year included a request for a new name for his co-believers. In the letter Borisov asked the governor if he can “solicit for us instead of the denigrating schismatic name, if nothing else in the modern scholars’ style, to have kindness to title us all *otdelenniki*.”<sup>667</sup> “Otdelenniki” literally means “separatists;” it was a neologism coined by the Vyg community elders. It was simply a calque of the word “schismatics” (Greek σχίσμα means “split”), however, neutral one, not charged with the aggressive ecclesiastical connotations.

Borisov explained his choice of the new word and the necessity to abandon the stigma of the “schismatic” name. His main argument appealed to the ideals of enlightened tolerance prevailed in the highest governmental circles during the reign of Catherine II, and more generally to the image of Russia among foreigners in general and philosophers in particular. Borisov’s argumentation was really striking:

because the ones who are separate in [regard to] books do not discredit the whole, no matter what they are. Consequently, we do not cause any harm to Russia with our separation for the sake of the truth of the holy antiquity only. It would also be more delicate and pleasant for foreigners, who are also separate in [regard to] modern books if they are accepted in the same manner, while the word schism is not pleasant to anyone; also nowadays [it] has almost disappeared from the writings of all philosophers and seems to be strange, especially to all the foreigners, so let it lapse into silence in the golden days of our wise Empress, [and]

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<sup>666</sup> Governor Potapov and the Vyg community leader knew each other personally and apparently maintained communication (Belolikov, “Iz istorii pomorskogo raskola vo vtoroi polovine XVIII v.,” in, 129). The letter itself can be found in: Idem., 131.

<sup>667</sup> V.Z. Belolikov, “Iz istorii pomorskogo raskola vo vtoroi polovine XVIII v.,” in *TIKDA*, no. 9 (1915), 137.

not defame her monarchy, magnificent in renowned scholarship everywhere under the heavens.<sup>668</sup>

Borisov continued:

Instead of this, in order not to denigrate us and not to defame glorious Russia, God, let *the separateness (otdelenie) that is wise and pleasant to all* come into being through the sovereign's mercy, and become established firmly and evenly, just like the former oppression in the double taxes was granted with heavenly grace.<sup>669</sup>

The term "*otdelenniki*," Borisov coined, did not prove felicitous. As in the case of Malissino's proposed "*dvoedantsy*" (double payers) in 1765, "*otdelenniki*" did not spread beyond this original proposal. The reason was simple – both of these words were too general; they highlighted only one feature, and not necessarily the most important one, of the phenomenon they were supposed to encompass. Therefore, they would certainly be confusing to use. Soon after Borisov's 1782 letter, a new and much more fitting word appeared in the discourse about the "Schism." This word was "old ritualists." This term inspired Borisov so much that sometime in the late 1780s he personally revised the copy of his letter to Governor Potapov, which was preserved for generations in the specially assembled collection.<sup>670</sup> Borisov struck through the word "*otdelenniki*," wrote "old ritualists" (*staroobriadtsy*) in its place, and crossed out the whole explanation of why "*otdelenniki*" was better than "schismatics." The new term "old ritualists" was so self-evident that it was unnecessary to elaborate on it. So, without explaining his changes, he

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<sup>668</sup> Ibid., 137. The publication is based on the manuscript, collection of correspondence, dated to the end of the eighteenth century from the library of the Troitskii Uspenskii monastery Nikodim founded in 1770s. About the collection: M.I. Lileev, *Opisanie rukopisei, khraniashchikhia v biblioteke Chernigovskoi dukhovnoi seminarii* (St. Petersburg: Tipografiia V.S. Balasheva, 1880), 163-167.

<sup>669</sup> Belolikov, "Iz istorii pomorskogo raskola vo vtoroi polovine XVIII v.," in, 137.

<sup>670</sup> Andrei Borisov, "Poslanie Peterburgskomu gubernatoru U.S. Potapovu," in E.M. Iukhimenko, *Literaturnoe nasledie Vygovskogo staroobriadcheskogo obshchezitel'stva*, t. II (Moscow: Iazyki slavianskikh kul'tur, 2008), 331-332. This publication contains a collection dated to the end of the eighteenth-beginning of the nineteenth centuries. Considering that Andrei Borisov revised the letter with his own hand, it is logical to date the revision sometimes between 1783 when the term "old ritualism" was introduced into the discourse of the "Schism" and 1791, the date of Borisov's death.

left only the part that “the *Old Ritualism* that is wise and pleasant to all” looks much better in the foreigners’ eyes. The new version of the letter now looked more complete and ready to show descendants a more effective version of the past:

If it is possible for you solicit for us instead of the denigrating *schismatic* name, if nothing else in the modern scholars’ style, to have kindness to title us all *old ritualists*. It would be more delicate and pleasant for foreigners. The word *schism* is not pleasant to anyone, also nowadays [it] has almost disappeared from the writings of all philosophers and seems to be strange, especially to all the foreigners, so let it lapse into silence in the golden days of our wise Empress, [and] not defame her monarchy magnificent in renowned scholarship everywhere under the heavens. Instead of this, in order not to denigrate us and not to defame glorious Russia, *God, let the Old Ritualism that is wise and pleasant to all* come into being through the sovereign’s mercy, and become established firmly and evenly, just like the former our oppression in the double taxes was granted with heavenly grace.<sup>671</sup>

The concept of “Old Ritualism” showed itself to fit perfectly with divergent goals not only because it could define the present situation and the hopes for a better, more tolerant future, but also because it could explain and redefine the past. Thus, “Old Ritualism” became the predominant concept in *The Chronicle of the Vetka Church* (1779-1784) written by the closest associate of the monk Nikodim, Iakov Beliaev (b. 1751- d. not earlier than 1792). *The Chronicle* used the concept of “Old Ritualism” in reference of the Vetka Church.<sup>672</sup> Even the official Church missionaries against the “Schism” accepted the term “old ritualists” by the end of 1790s as a replacement for the term “schismatics.”<sup>673</sup>

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<sup>671</sup> Andrei Borisov, *Poslanie Peterburgskomu gubernatoru U.S. Potapovu*,” 331-332.

<sup>672</sup> Cited by: Belolikov, “Iakov Stefanov Beliaev,” 432, 444.

<sup>673</sup> Andrei (Ioannov), *Polnoe istoricheskoe izvestie o staroobriadtsakh; Sergii (Iurshev), igumen, Zerkalo dlia staroobriadtsev ne pokoriaiushchikhsia pravoslavnoi tserkvi* (St. Petersburg: pri Gubernskom pravlenii, 1799); and others.

## Conclusion

Ironically, even though Nikodim did not succeed in his quest, the term he created unintentionally de facto created the confessional entity - “Old Ritualism.” Notwithstanding the fact that “old ritualists” had never had a unified social organization or a homogeneous set of beliefs, they became a separate confessional group in the imagination of the state and church hierarchy, the general public and the “old ritualists” themselves. It was not a broad, loose and highly pejorative ecclesiastical category that identified an ecclesiastical deviation, that is, the category of “schismatics,” but a new concept that was neutral in its essence and pointed to distinction rather than to deviation.

The term “old ritualists” was a common ground of sorts – it stressed difference in rituals without challenging the delicate questions of unity in faith and Church. Yet, it did exactly that in practice: as many religious dissident groups acquired the term for self-identification, it showed the discrepancy between its formal and perceived meanings. Formally, it stressed simply the adherence to ancient church rites, however, in practice it referred to a type of faith (*vera*). Therefore, the concept of “Old Ritualism” carried multiple interpretations and for many people it became a tool to express their ambition for a separate confessional status. In a way, soon after its inception “Old Ritualism” became the vehicle for adherents to claim their right to believe as they wished; ultimately, the Russian Enlightenment promised exactly that – freedom to all “faiths” and “laws.” Indeed, the complexity and ambiguity of the Russian Enlightenment came together in this so deceptively familiar word “*staroobriadchestvo*.”

### CHAPTER III. The Rise of the “Old Ritualism” in Viatka

The term “*old ritualists*” (*staroobriadtsy*) made its way into the documents of Viatka authorities no earlier than the beginning of the 1790’s – a decade after its emergence in Nikodim’s letters and petitions. Yet, the meaningful change in the way civil as well ecclesiastical authorities wrote about “schismatics” started earlier. The aforementioned 1783 governor-general Kashkin’s report to the Senate and the 1784 letter of Viatka bishop Lavrentii to the Senate’s chief procurator Aleksandr Viazemskii played an important role in that change. The close study of the documents the provincial civil and ecclesiastical institutions produced in the last decades of the eighteenth century reveals the development of the complex interplay of power even in seemingly static and formal official language.

#### The 1787 Senate Decree

Even though the decree abolishing the Schismatic office declared that “schismatics” were to be treated in the civil institutions in accordance with their social ranks “without oppression,” the Viatka secular government was harsh with this category of local residents. Particularly, in March 1783 the provincial office sentenced the brothers Feofil and Savva Belykh to lashes for the alleged “seducing into the Schism” of their own family members. The sentence came after they spent almost a year in the local ecclesiastical office jail and “fell into complete ruin.” The office acknowledged this fact and resorted to a moderate type of corporal punishment as a sign of “Her Imperial Majesty’s mercy,” even though they deserved truly “severe punishment.” The lashes were supposed to not only punish Belykh brothers for their crimes, but even more so inspire “fright in others.”<sup>674</sup>

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<sup>674</sup> GAKO, f. 237, op. 74, d. 841 (The case about “schismatics” in Kukarka district, 1783), l. 44 ob.



In May 1784, Viatka secular authorities sentenced yet other local “schismatics” to harsh punishment for spiritual crime: the newly converted “schismatics” the Vetoshkins, the Chulkins and Kutergin, were sentenced to penal servitude after being flogged and having their nostrils slit because of their blasphemy, proselytism, and refusal to baptize their children in the official Church.<sup>675</sup> The Viatka spiritual consistory that reported these crimes to the civil authorities habitually provided a whole set of ecclesiastical and civil grounds for the prosecution of the said “schismatics.” This time, however, the consistory’s list of legalities was peculiar: first, it included references to Scripture and canon law that condemned blasphemy and sectarianism; then, it referenced regulations of “schismatic” affairs stated in *The Spiritual Regulation* (1721) and Synodal degrees. Finally, the consistory found it important to strengthen its argument with quotes from *The Law Code of 1649* and *The Military Statute (Artikul voinskii)* (1714), both of which promised capital punishment for the crime of blasphemy.<sup>676</sup>

The officers of the Nolinsk *nizhniaia rasprava* (*Noloinskaia nizhniaia rasprava*), the judicial office at the district level, which was responsible for the notorious sentence to the Vetoshkins, Chulkins, and Kutergin, partially followed the consistory’s recommendation.<sup>677</sup> First, the local officers brought up Peter I’s legislation from 1720 and 1722, which acknowledged the existence of “registered schismatics,” yet restricted any sort of religious practice or proselytism under the threat of penal servitude.<sup>678</sup> In addition, the officers referred to not only *The Military Statute* (1714), as the consistory suggested, but also to *The Naval Statute (Morskoi ustav)* (1720).

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<sup>675</sup> For more detailed discussion of this case see pp. 195-196 of this dissertation. The sentence can be found here: *GAKO*, f. 583, op. 4, d. 241 (The case of “schismatic” Vetoshkin, 1784), ll. 6-7. See also the investigation: *Ibid.*, op. 2, d. 1373 (The case of “schismatic” Ivan Chulkin, 1782); *Ibid.*, op. 3, d. 1153 (The case of “schismatic” Moisei Chulkin, 1783).

<sup>676</sup> *GAKO*, f. 583, op. 1a, d. 859, l. 33. The consistory specifically references Chapter 1, Article 1 of *The Law Code* (PSZ, t. 1, no. 1, (January 29, 1749), 3) and Chapter 1, Article 3 of *The Military Statute (Artikul voinskii s kratkim tolkovaniem* (St. Petersburg: pri Akademii Nauk, 1757), 6).

<sup>677</sup> The sentence can be found here: *GAKO*, f. 583, op. 4, d. 241, ll. 6-7.

<sup>678</sup> Feb. 9, 1720, April 29, 1722, July 3, 1722, July 16, 1722 (Articles 5 and 7).

The Nolinsk *nizhniaia rasprava*, unlike their ecclesiastic counterparts, was more concerned with the “schismatics”’ reluctance to abide by the law, rather than in the facts of blasphemy, and used the statutes accordingly; still, both of the aforementioned law codes mandated a death sentence for military servitors guilty of insubordination.<sup>679</sup> Needless to say, none of the convicts was a military servitor and, therefore, they could hardly fall under the jurisdiction of the statutes.

The resolution of the Nolinsk *nizhniaia rasprava* also appealed to much more current legislation. First, the decree from June 4, 1763 entitled “On everyone’s withholding from commentaries and discourses not appropriate to his rank” informed the public that some “people of corrupt morals and thoughts” (*razvrashchennykh нравов и мыслей людей*) disturb peace in the society by “commenting imprudently not only on civil liberties and government and our statutes that are being issued, but even on the divine laws, without knowing anything.” The decree advised such people to “withhold” themselves from doing so under the threat of the empress’s supreme “wrath.”<sup>680</sup> The degree, of course, concerned political commentaries in regard to Catherine II’s questionable accession to the throne through the forceable removal of her husband, Emperor Peter III. It is hard to see how reading old printed books in public in the 1780s could fall under the provisions of this decree, even on a technicality. Yet, because the law discussed the crimes against the official Orthodox faith and piety, the *rasprava* officers found it suitable for this case.

Another code that appeared in the Nolinsk trial sentence, *The Police Statute (Ustav blagochiniia)* (1782), was directly concerned with religious disturbance of peace in the society. Articles 236 and 271, similarly to the aforementioned regulations of military and naval statutes,

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<sup>679</sup> *Artikul voinskii*, 102, 104 (articles 27, 28, 35); *Kniga ustav morskoi, o vsem chto kasaetsia dobromu upravleniiu, v bytnosti flota na more*, 6<sup>th</sup> ed. (St. Petersburg: pri Imperatorskoi Akademii Nauk, 1780), 138-139, 142 (book 5, chapter 1, articles 9, 10, 17).

<sup>680</sup> *Ukazy vsepresveishei, derzhavneishei, velikoi gosudaryni imperatritsy, Ekateriny Alekseevny samoderzhitsy vsereossiskoi, sostoiavshiesia s genvaria po iul’ mesiatz 1763 goda, napechatany po vysochaishemy Eia Imperatorskago Velichestva poveleniiu* (St. Petersburg: pri Senate, 1764), 118-120.

prohibited the disturbance of the legal order, while Article 243 reinforced the long-existing ban on conversion from official Orthodoxy to any other faith or confession.<sup>681</sup> Therefore, the Nolinsk *rasprava* stressed that those “schismatics” were punished for their conversion to the “Schism,” proselytism, and unlawful commentaries about the faith. But it was their disobedience to civil authorities, namely the “schismatics” refusal to sign a statement of compliance, that disturbed the *rasprava* above all else. It was not common for provincial secular authorities to use the decree from June 4, 1763, or military legislation in “schismatic” cases, still they had a rationale for doing so.

It took three years and involved Empress Catherine II, the Senate’s chief procurator Viazemskii and Bishop Lavrentii of Viatka, before the Senate finally annulled the odious sentence in July 1787 and ordered Viatka authorities to release the offenders from jail without any punishment.<sup>682</sup> During all this time Ivan Shmakov remained in the imperial capital, most likely advocating for his co-believers’ cause. He even managed to solicit a copy of the Senate’s decree and soon put it in work for the advantage of his fellow believers.

The decree of the Senate directed the governor-general of the combined Viatka and Kazan province Prince Platon Meshcherskii “to make free from the punishment as well as from trial” all of the aforementioned sentenced peasants. The Senate deduced from the pertinent legislation that instead of being prosecuted they “were supposed to remain in complete freedom in the principles and rituals they adhere to.”<sup>683</sup>

Just like the Nolinsk *nizhniaia rasprava* the Senate constructed the decision to release the condemned “schismatics” (it employed this term even though “old ritualism” already had gained

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<sup>681</sup> *Ustav blagochiniia ili politseiskoi*, ch. 1: 15, 16, 19.

<sup>682</sup> *GAKO*, f. 583, op. 7, d. 851 (The case about the release of the “schismatics” who refused to baptize their newly born children in the official church, 1787).

<sup>683</sup> *Ibid.*, op. 10, d. 1015, ll. 7ob.-8.

some ground by this time) without punishment on existing legislation of Russian empire. Yet, the array of laws the Senate cited in the decree to Governor-general Meshcherskii expressed a drastic contrast to the laws brought up in the Nolinsk *rasprava*'s sentence. The Senate first and foremost appealed to the decree from December 14, 1762, and the manifesto from March 3, 1764, both of which promised "schismatics" "to cause no oppression" towards them or their children on the condition of their paying double poll tax.<sup>684</sup> However, as the Senate noted, since the double tax had been abolished in 1782, they were responsible only for the taxes in accordance with their rank. The Senate stated as especially important for its decision on this case Articles 494, 495 and 496 of Catherine II's *Instruction to the Legislative Commission* (1767). As was mentioned before, these articles praised religious tolerance as the best way for peace and security in the empire that incorporated a variety of "faiths."<sup>685</sup> Therefore, the Senate concluded, "the peasants indicated were supposed to be left in complete freedom following their rituals since the aforementioned laws commanded not to cause them any oppression."<sup>686</sup> Obviously, the Senate considered "schismatics" to be in the company of other "faiths" that could be tolerated in accordance with the Catherine II's *Instruction*. This represented another sign that "schismatics" were hypothetically considered a distinct confession.

The Senate also denounced the way the Nolinsk *nizhniaia rasprava* interpreted the law about proselytism. *Rasprava* officers found Filimon Vetoshkin to be an especially dangerous "schismatic" because he publicly read and commented on the old printed books and, therefore, "with ill intent caused perversion and so seduced" believers in official Orthodoxy.<sup>687</sup> The Senate

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<sup>684</sup> PSZ, t. 16, no. 11725 (December 14, 1762. About the permission for "schismatics" and come and settle in Russia), 129-132; *Ibid.*, no. 12067 (March 3, 1764. Manifesto about the new count of "schismatics"), 596-597.

<sup>685</sup> *Nakaz eia imperatorskogo velichestva*, 320-322.

<sup>686</sup> GAKO, f. 583, op. 10, d. 1015, ll. 7ob.-8.

<sup>687</sup> *Ibid.*, l. 8.

viewed such a claim as baseless: even though witnesses testified that Vetoshkin had read publicly and invited them to listen, he did not force those witnesses to do so, and nobody among them actually converted to the “Schism” after all.<sup>688</sup> Still, the Senate found Vetoshkin to be a “troublesome man” (*bespokoinyi chelovek*) and commanded Viatka authorities to restrain him, via his signed statement of compliance, from further reading of such books and “trouble making.”<sup>689</sup>

So, even though both of the secular institutions, Nolinsk *nizhniaia rasprava* and the Senate, relied on the extant legislation in their decisions, they arrived at diametrically opposed results. It mattered most what laws were chosen and what classification specific deeds received. The fact that the Senate appealed to the documents that promoted religious tolerance was decisive for the future practice of interpretation and law enforcement in Viatka. The Senate’s order to Governor-general Meshcherskii became an important reference point in the interaction of secular authorities and ecclesiastical institutions: Viatka secular authorities did not completely withdraw from the prosecution of “schismatics;” yet, they became more reluctant to respond to the clergy’s ceaseless complaints about the menace posed by the “Schism.” At the same time, the Senate’s ruling became an important tool for Viatka residents labeled as “schismatics” to defend their liberties.

### **The Inception of the “Old Ritualism” in Viatka**

Local “schismatics” used a reference to the Senate’s 1787 decree as a direct shield from the clergy’s encroachment. Already in February 1788 Ivan Shmakov petitioned Governor-general Meshcherskii about the harassment and prosecution of several of his co-believers. Shmakov informed the governor that he and the group of Urzhum and Nolinsk peasants he represented “adhere to the faith and law conveyed in the old printed books” (*soderzhashchie veru i zakon v*

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<sup>688</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>689</sup> *Ibid.*

*staropechatnykh knigakh izobrazhennyi*). Shmakov also stressed that he had already complained to the empress herself about the “inhumane persecution” on the part of local clerical and civil authorities. The petitioner added that the governor should already be well aware of this fact and alluded to the Senate’s 1787 decree: you “should have already been informed [about the complaint] from Her Majesty’s supreme command you have received.”<sup>690</sup> The petition asked the governor in a very self-disparaging manner to release the peasant in question and protect all other “voiceless and miserable slaves” (*bezglasnykh mizernykh rabov*) who adhere to the old books. “Let us and our descendants be free and independent from the ecclesiastical authorities, who torture and ruin us not due to their real obligations, but for the sake of their own lucre,” cried out the petition.<sup>691</sup>

Needless to say that soon after, when Governor-general Meshcherskii sent a very angry request to the authorities mentioned in the petition for “explanatory reports,” the convicted peasants had already been released “due to the absence of any explicit evidence against them.” It only took two weeks after Shamakov submitted the petition.<sup>692</sup> Most likely, the very fact of the petition’s submission and reference to the legally guaranteed “freedom” had spurred the work of justice.

The adherents of the old books grew more vocal and insistent in protecting themselves from the encroachment of parish clergy and even local secular authorities. In November 1790, according to the report from the priest from the village Ishlyk (Nolinsk district) Luka Popov, the peasant Ivan Fedorovykh told him that they, “schismatics,” would not allow priests of the official Church to baptize their children because Ivan Shmakov “has the *ukase* not to do so.”<sup>693</sup> The peasant Andrei Vetoshkin, another of the so-called “schismatics,” similarly referred to the Senate decree

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<sup>690</sup> *GAKO*, f. 583, op. 4, d. 61, l. 18.

<sup>691</sup> *Ibid.*, l. 19.

<sup>692</sup> *Ibid.*, ll. 20-21.

<sup>693</sup> *GAKO*, f. 583, op. 10, d. 1015, l. 10.

from 1787, and he was released from jail in accordance with it. He used the reference, however, not so much as a defense tool, but as a manifestation of his lawful rights. In July 1791 he petitioned the Viatka provincial office with a demand to defend him and his infant son from the encroachments of Nolinsk local secular authorities, namely the *nizhnii zemskii sud* and its officer.<sup>694</sup> The petition explained that the child was born while his father, Andrei Vetoshkin, was “in the Schism, so he was baptized in accordance with the rituals of the old printed books following the rule of our ancient canons.”<sup>695</sup> Therefore, the petition affirmed that not only the father, but the son as well was “schismatic” in a legal sense. (Notably “the Schism” in these sentences indicated social status rather than religious beliefs; the latter was defined by the reference to the old printed books.) The petition explained further that Vetoshkin himself had already been tried for the same crime, but the sentence was annulled and he was released in accordance with the Senate’s decree. The Viatka provincial office as well as Nolinsk authorities should be aware of it, the petition stated further. Therefore, Vetoshkin’s petition asked to “confirm” for the Nolinsk *nizhnii zemskii sud* and its officer the Senate’s *ukase*. The petition assumed that in accordance with it the court and its officer had no right either to demand the baptism of his son in the official Church, or to make him “wrongful harassment and red-tape.” “Set me free from such unfounded claims,” the petition concluded. It obviously stressed Vetoshkin’s lawful right to freedom from oppression rather than for mercy or protection from on high, as Shmakov’s petition did.<sup>696</sup> (It is important to note that the petition was written in a neat scribal handwriting by another “schismatic,” the peasant from Nolinsk district Mikhailo Shvetsov.<sup>697</sup>)

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<sup>694</sup> *GAKO*, f. 583, op. 11, d. 487 (The case about the petition of peasant Andrei Vetoshkin, 1791), ll. 1-1 ob.

<sup>695</sup> *Ibid.*, l. 1.

<sup>696</sup> *Ibid.*, l. 1 ob.

<sup>697</sup> *Ibid.*

Interestingly enough, the 1787 Senate decree did not employ the term “old ritualists” (*staroobriadtsy*), even though the word had already circulated in the language of the highest imperial circle (specifically, it can be found in the formal writings of Petr Rumiantsev, Grigorii Potemkin, and the Empress Catherine II herself). The Senate decree retained the term “schismatics.” This does not mean that the language of the decree was not new, though. The Senate introduced the notion of vaguely defined “freedom” that “schismatics” could exercise in relation to their “ritual” (*obriad*). The notion of “*old ritualists*” came to the surface of authoritative discourse in the context of that newly acquired “freedom.” As a result, these two terms became connected one with another in the newly appearing language about the “Schism” that the bureaucrats of the Viatka provincial office adopted in the beginning of the 1790s and the so-called “schismatics” themselves started to reinforce in their petitions.

The Senate’s 1787 repeal of the severe sentence levied against the Vetoshkins, Chulkins, and Kutergin was not yet the end of that story. In August 1790, the Viatka spiritual consistory reported to the provincial office again concerning Ivan Shmakov and two other peasants, Kondratii Postnikov from Nolinsk and Epimakh Cherezov from Urzhum district. According to the local priest’s report, these three “*muzhiks*” administered priestly duties: they rebaptized “rightful” believers and performed funeral services.<sup>698</sup> The provincial office ordered Nolinsk *nizhnii zemskii sud* to investigate the case using very traditional rhetoric: if the designated “false priests” truly “appear guilty of that [rebaptizing] or of turning away from Orthodoxy.”<sup>699</sup> The provincial officers also ordered local authorities to warn the ones who seceded from the official Church under the

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<sup>698</sup> *GAKO*, f. 583, op. 10, d. 751 (On the trial of Nolinsk peasant Ivan Shmakov and his fellows, 1790-1791), ll. 1-1 ob.

<sup>699</sup> *Ibid.*, l. 3.



influence of the said “false priests” to accept exhortation from local clergy without “temper”; otherwise, the “rude fellows will be prosecuted according to the law.”<sup>700</sup> Notwithstanding the customary beginning, the investigation and decision on this case revealed a major shift in the language Viatka bureaucrats utilized while writing about “schismatics.”

First of all, the notion of “old ritualist” (*staroobriadets*) appeared for the first time in Viatka’s official documents in the context of this case. The record of Ivan Shmakov’s interrogation that took place in the spiritual consistory in July 1791 stated that he “entered the *Old Ritualism* (*staroobriadstvo*) of his own volition due to reading old printed books during his visit to the lower [Volga] cities; and now he, Ivan, does not want to abandon the *Old Ritualism* and wishes to remain in it forever.”<sup>701</sup> In the rest of the document Shmakov was referred to as “schismatic” and his belief as “schismatic teaching.”<sup>702</sup> In addition, nowhere else prior to this point in the lengthy case of the investigation of Shmakov was the notion of “old ritualism” used. Instead, ecclesiastical as well as civil authorities held to the customary terms of “Schism” and “schismatic.” This all together indicates that the term “old ritualism” (*staroobriadstvo*) came from Ivan Shmakov himself rather than from anyone among bureaucrats involved in the case. (Plus, by his own acknowledgment in a report he submitted to the office before the interrogation, from 1790 to July 1791 he resided in St. Petersburg;<sup>703</sup> therefore, it is very probable that he brought the new term “*old ritualism*” from the imperial capital, where it was already in use among some local adherents of the old printed books).<sup>704</sup> Interestingly, the resolution the Viatka provincial office made on the consistory report containing Shmakov’s interrogation adopted the notion of “old ritualism” and put it in the context

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<sup>700</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>701</sup> *Ibid.*, l. 19 ob.

<sup>702</sup> *Ibid.*, ll. 18-20 ob.

<sup>703</sup> *Ibid.*, l. 18.

<sup>704</sup> See Metropolitan Gavriil’s communication with St. Petersburg “old ritualists” in: Subbotin, *K istorii Rogozhskogo kladbishcha*, 20 (Gavriil’s note on the “old ritualists” request, November 9, 1792)

of the Senate decree from 1787, in which Shmakov was personally involved. The very same provincial officials, who in August 1790 ordered the investigation of the “false teachers,” in September 1791 referenced the decree tacitly: “in agreement with the issued *ukases* as confirmed in the said decree *old ritualists enjoy complete freedom in faith*.”<sup>705</sup> The office still asked to require the “schismatics” (it chose exactly this word this time) to sign statements of compliance, yet took no further actions.<sup>706</sup>

The Urzhum *nizhnii zemskii sud* made a similar resolution in September 1792. It reacted to the complaint of local clergy about the “schismatic” Ignatii Bogdanov with the statement that the interrogation “revealed no crime other than his Schism.” Therefore, the court officer continued, the Viatka provincial office ordered “to leave such schismatics free with their Old Ritualism.” As had become usual, Ignatii Bogdanov was required to sign a statement of compliance, while his case marked as resolved.<sup>707</sup>

These cases marked the emergence of the term “*old ritualists*” in the documents of Viatka bureaucratic institutions. It spread quickly from document to document and soon became common. More than that, in the following decade it played a very important role in local religious dissidents’ struggle for “freedom.” This story perfectly demonstrates the significant role language played in the exercise of power and negotiation about it on different levels of state authorities.<sup>708</sup>

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<sup>705</sup> *GAKO*, f. 583, op. 10, d. 751 (On the trial of Nolinsk peasant Ivan Shmakov and his fellows, 1790-1791), l. 22.

<sup>706</sup> *Ibid.*, ll. 23-23 ob.

<sup>707</sup> *GAKO*, f. 583, op. 10, d. 592 (On the disrespect of the priest Kochkin on the part of Urzhum district peasants, 1790-1792), l. 9 ob.

<sup>708</sup> For comparison, the term “old ritualism” in the documents of Cheliabinsk spiritual office (*dukhovnoe pravlenie*) appeared for the first time only in 1800: Sukhina, “Dokumenty XVIII veka kak istochnik svedenii o staroobriadtsakh,” 12.

## Polylogue About “Freedom”: Provincial Legal Hermeneutics

Viatka secular authorities found themselves in a difficult position at the beginning of the 1790s. On the one hand, clergy continued to bombard them with the complaints about the “schismatics”’ misbehavior, demanding protection for the official Church and faith. On the other hand, the so-called “schismatics” petitioned them, too, asking for protection of their recently proclaimed “freedom” from clergy and local administrations. Between February and September 1791 the Viatka provincial office received four such petitions: from the peasant Iakov Mel’nikov, representing 34 households (200 male and female peasants) of Glazov district;<sup>709</sup> from Iakov Shalimov, representing 80 peasants from Malmyzh district;<sup>710</sup> from Gavriilo Fukalov, representing 203 peasants from Nolinsk district (another 1390 peasants later revealed their solidarity with the first group);<sup>711</sup> and, finally, from the peasant Efrem Nikonov, representing 153 residents of various villages of Malmyzh district.<sup>712</sup>

In these petitions the peasants stated that they followed “the rite by the old printed books” (*obriad po staropechatnym knigam*), yet local clergy forced them to attend the official Church and observe its sacraments, as well as to submit to the clergy’s right to baptize their children and bury their deceased. Otherwise, clergymen demanded payment of the fine for non-attendance at the sacraments; in addition, they insisted that the peasants pay the *ruga* (the annual fee to support parish clergy), as though they were official Orthodox parishioners. The petitioners asked the provincial office to “rid” (*izbavit*) them of clergy’s demands and “leave them free in the rite of the old printed books” (another variant: “leave them in complete freedom in the rite from the old

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<sup>709</sup> *GAKO*, f. 583, op. 11, d. 238 (Case by the petitions of “schismatics” from Glazov, Malmyzh, and Nolinsk districts, 1791-1792), ll. 1-1 ob., 61-64 ob.

<sup>710</sup> *Ibid.*, ll. 2-2 ob., 66.

<sup>711</sup> *Ibid.*, ll. 16-49, 50.

<sup>712</sup> *Ibid.*, ll. 68-72.

printed books”).<sup>713</sup> Without doubt, the wording of these requests directly referred to the language of 1787 Senate decree. Apparently, it was a demand rather than a cry for mercy.

The Viatka provincial office found itself in an ambiguous situation: on the one hand, local ecclesiastical authorities represented the only official version of Orthodoxy and their demands were rightful in this regard; yet, on the other hand, the imperial government promoted (even though in a very general terms) enlightened tolerance towards the so-called “schismatics” and even annulled competent sentences, such as the one levied against the Vetoshkins, et al. Thus, in its resolution, dated March 1792, the provincial office took a reserved position.

It is important to stress that the petitioners and the provincial government approached the terms “Schism” and “schismatic” differently. Petitioners *contrasted* “schismatic” status with belonging to “the rite by the old printed books” while the provincial office treated these terms as *synonyms*. In particular, the petitioners stressed: “our grandfathers, fathers, and we ourselves ... used to be registered during previous censuses in the double poll tax under the name of schismatics, however, now in accordance with the supreme decrees we pay only the single poll tax.”<sup>714</sup> This statement implied that the abolition of the double poll tax meant the elimination of the label “schismatic” and the introduction of new rights and liberties, first of all freedom from all responsibilities to the official Church.

In contrast, the provincial office equated the “Schism” with separation from the official Church: the office commanded local authorities to examine “if it is true that all of these peasants are in the Schism, and did they fall into it long ago and make themselves outcasts from the Orthodox Church.”<sup>715</sup> The last order was in fact troublesome since in the absence of the double

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<sup>713</sup> See above cited petitions.

<sup>714</sup> *GAKO*, f. 583, op. 11, d. 238, ll. 1, 68.

<sup>715</sup> *GAKO*, f. 583, op. 11, d. 238, l. 4.

poll tax and the registration of “schismatics” that resulted from it, authorities could rely only on people’s testimonies as to their “schismatic” status, which could not really be verified. It was not surprising, therefore, that during the investigation of the several hundred Nolinsk peasants named in Fukalov’s petition, another 1390 people decided to claim their “Schism,” too.<sup>716</sup>

Based on the data it received from local secular authorities, the Viatka provincial office had to make important decisions on its own: whether to exempt self-proclaimed “schismatics” from payment of the fine for non-confession in the official Church and from the annual payment of *ruga*, and allow them to perform rituals of confession and burial independently from the official church. The decisions on all these points reveal that the “schismatics” were in a legislative limbo due to their complicated confessional, fiscal and social statuses. The tolerant legislation about “schismatics” from the early years of Catherine II’s reign added to the complexity rather than resolving it because of the circular character and very general wording of the 1762-1764 decrees. As a result, in spite of the massive legislation on “schismatics,” law enforcement even on such mundane questions as fine paying varied, depending on the local interpretation of the law.

First, there was the question of fines for not partaking in the sacrament of confession. In accordance with the 1716 *ukase*, provincial authorities argued, they should fine people who did not attend confession annually. The same decree levied a double poll tax on “schismatics”; however, as the provincial office added, “legislation that followed [the 1716 decree] did not allow causing any oppression to them in all other matters.”<sup>717</sup> In 1782 the double poll tax was abolished, therefore, the office concluded:

since the law about the fine for non-confession concerns the right-believers only,  
because even after the collection of the fine they are obligated to partake in

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<sup>716</sup> For Nolinsk *nizhnii zemskii sud* report and lists of almost 1600 “schismatics” the court put together see: *Ibid.*, ll. 15-48 ob.

<sup>717</sup> *Ibid.*, l. 51 ob.

confession, the provincial office assumes that schismatics should be freed from the collection of such fines completely as they do not wish to confess [in the official Church] ever but have also completely withdrawn from the Church.”<sup>718</sup>

Second, regarding *ruga* the provincial office made a similar argument that freed “schismatics” from the duty to support financially the parish clergy, notwithstanding the official Church’s contrary position and the deleterious consequences for local clergy. The provincial office acknowledged the complexity of the situation: on the one hand, “those schismatics have nothing to do with the [official] Church clergy;” on the other hand, due to the increase of “schismatics,” especially in Nolinsk district, “clergy [soon] will not have their daily bread and allowance.” Yet, the provincial office argued, it “cannot force schismatics to pay *ruga* for the [official] clergy because of the absence of the regulation for that matter in the legislation.”<sup>719</sup>

Third, regarding the last “schismatic” question, on an exemption from having the official clergy perform baptism and burial, the provincial office replied evasively. It stated that a legislative conundrum existed in that matter and tried to evade its resolution:

it is impossible either to approve their request or to reject it, because Article 6 of the *ukase* from June 16, 1722, orders precluding all of the religious rites for special occasions (*treby*) performed by schismatic priests and laymen; yet, all of the legislation that followed did not permit causing any oppression to them and their children, but nowhere did it say that they can perform such rites by themselves;

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<sup>718</sup> This and the following sections of the Viatka provincial office resolution are cited by the “extract” (*ekstrakt*) that the office made for “schismatics” upon their request. *Ibid.*, l. 51 ob. The question of the non-confession fines for “schismatics” arose soon after the Synod’s March 1784 order to the bishop of Tobol’sk to abandon the notion of “schismatic” altogether (see the Synodal decree to the bishop of the Sevsk eparchy from March 19, 1784: *Sobranie postanovlenii po chasti raskola*, kn. I, 727-729). However, on the imperial level this question was resolved almost a decade later when a church penance completely replaced the fine. *PSZ*, t. 26, no. 19743 (January, 1801), 5211-523.

<sup>719</sup> *GAKO*, f. 583, op. 11, d. 238, ll. 51 ob.-52.

the provincial office considers this matter to be in the jurisdiction of spiritual rather than of civil government.<sup>720</sup>

The latter statement legally meant that the so-called “schismatics” could practice their own rituals freely since ecclesiastical authorities did not formally have the power to prosecute them.

This was not the end of the story, however. Already in June 1792 Vasilii Shvetsov and Iakov Shalimov, the representatives of Nolinsk, Urzhum, and Malmyzh district peasants who “adhered to the rite according to the old printed books” (*soderzhashchiia obriada staropechatnykh knig*), petitioned the Viatka provincial office about the illicit activities of the local clergy. The petitioners claimed that even though they belonged to the aforementioned “rite according to the old printed books” and therefore “should be free” from the payment of *ruga*, the parish clergy continued to demand it and other monetary charges from them under the threat of severe punishment. Appealing to the 1724 ukase that forbade official church priests to visit “schismatic” houses, Shvetsov and Shalimov asked the office to restrain the clergy and protect them from those demands.<sup>721</sup> The Viatka provincial office’s resolution was as expected: it agreed with the petitioners’ reference to the ban on clergy visits in the 1724 ukase. It also found lawful their request to prohibit monetary charges from them in accordance to the already familiar Articles 494, 495, and 496 of Catherine II’s *Instruction to the Legislative Commission* (1767). Therefore, the provincial office resolved the question completely in favor of petitioners and warned the clergy about any encroachment on their “freedom”:

since [clergy] should not visit *old ritualists* at all, as, due to their own superstition, they completely alienate themselves from the holy church and do not partake in

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<sup>720</sup> *Ibid.*, ll. 52-52 ob.

<sup>721</sup> *GAKO*, f. 583, op. 12, d. 465 (Case by the petition of “schismatics” from Nolinsk, Urzhum, and Malmyzh districts, 1792), ll. 1-1 ob. Mikhail Shvetsov wrote this petition himself, as in the case of aforementioned petition on behalf of Andrei Vetoshkin.

its sacraments, also they should not be forced to give *ruga* and money for feast days and religious rites for special occasions, because according to Articles 494, 495, and 496 of Her Imperial Majesty's Instruction to the Legislative Commission none of those [fees] should be imposed on them by compulsion.

Therefore, the office concluded, the Viatka ecclesiastical consistory should restrain local clergy, so "they could not do any harassment (*pritesneniia*) in anything to those old ritualists (*staroobriadtsy*), and instead leave them forever in complete freedom to practice their rite." The provincial office even promised a lawful punishment to clergymen who did not obey this order and communicated its decision to the secular administration of the corresponding districts.<sup>722</sup>

Not surprisingly, the church authorities disagreed with the provincial office's judgment. In November, 1792, the provincial consistory sent a letter of protest claiming it was lawful on the part of clergy to forcibly baptize "schismatic" children in the official Church and to collect monetary fees from them for support of the parish clergy. The consistory referred to Peter I's legislation,<sup>723</sup> claiming that it was not aware of any current laws that specifically abolished it. Obviously, the consistory did not find Catherine II's general promise of "freedom" for "schismatics" to be satisfactorily clear, as the provincial officers did. Therefore, the ecclesiastical authorities requested the provincial office's clarification in a courteous yet trenchant manner:

since the consistory does not have any specific orders repealing those *ukases*, it cannot make its own resolution, instead it asks for the provincial office's judgment and consideration, so could it kindly answer and made sure to notify the consistory

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<sup>722</sup> *Ibid.*, ll. 2-2 ob.

<sup>723</sup> *PSZ*, t. 6, no. 3987 (April 29, 1722. About persons who abandon Orthodoxy), 667; *Ibid.*, no. 4009 (May 15, 1722), 680-681 (May 15, 1722. Article 23: About the collection of fees from "schismatics" for parish clergy); *Ibid.*, no. 4052 (July 16, 1722. Article 6: About the baptism of "schismatics" children by the "rightful" priests), 741-742.



whether the provincial office has special orders repealing the aforementioned ukases.<sup>724</sup>

It is especially interesting that in this letter the consistory followed the provincial office's lead and adopted the term "old ritualists" (*staroobriadtsy*), used as a synonym for "schismatics" both referring to the provincial office's decision as well as in the text of the consistory's own resolution.<sup>725</sup> It signals the growing acceptance of this term in local bureaucratic discourse.

Documents preserved in the provincial office archival fund do not contain a reply to this letter. However, the discursive confrontation between the office and consistory continued. The question of baptism caused especially strong tension. According to consistory reports, Nolinsk and Urzhum districts "schismatics" were reluctant to submit to the parish clergy's demands to baptize their children by asserting that they were "in the Schism."<sup>726</sup> One of the "schismatics," the peasant Timofei Fominykh, even declared to the priest that he was protected by the *zemskii sud* and a certain *ukase* retained there.<sup>727</sup> (The *ukase* was, most likely, the 1787 Senate decree proclaiming "freedom" for "schismatics.") Yet, the spiritual consistory insisted on action on the part of the provincial office, stressing that those "schismatics" should be prosecuted not only in accordance with the aforementioned legislation of Peter I ordering the baptism of children in the official Church but also under Catherine II's Police Statute of 1782. The latter clearly stated in Article 243: "If anyone should initiate a quarrel or a strife with someone else because of a difference in faith, or would inflict abuse and defamation, that person should be sent to court and be punished in accordance with his guilt as the law directs."<sup>728</sup> Thus, the consistory interpreted an article

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<sup>724</sup> *GAKO*, f. 583, op. 11, d. 238, ll. 85 ob.-86.

<sup>725</sup> See the consistory's resolution: *Ibid.*, ll. 84 ob.-85 ob.

<sup>726</sup> *GAKO*, f. 583, op. 12, d. 924 (), ll. 1-6.

<sup>727</sup> *Ibid.*, l. 1.

<sup>728</sup> *Ustav blagochiniia ili politseiskoi*, 62. See other Viatka spiritual consistory's appeals to the same set of legislation: *GAKO*, f. 583, op. 16, d. 559 (About Nolinsk district "schismatics" Tulanskii and Chirkov, 1796), l. 1 ob.; *Ibid.*, op. 17, d. 1219, l. 1 ob.; *Ibid.*, op. 17, d. 1325, l. 2; *Ibid.*, op. 17, d. 1396, l. 3 ob.

intended for the protection of confessional peace in general as a tool for the official clergy to protect themselves from resistance to their authority.

This time the provincial office had to make a more definite judgment in regard of the baptism of “schismatic” children. Initially, it commanded the Nolinsk and Urzhum *zemskie sudy* to send their officers to those “schismatics” to convince them “with all possible calmness and humanness” (*so vsiakoïu tikhostiïu i chelovekoliubiem*) to allow official Church priests to administer baptism and communion to their children. Should the “schismatics” disobey, they would be treated “according to the severity of the law.”<sup>729</sup> As all of the reluctant peasants refused to obey the authority of *zemskie sudy* either, the provincial office made a compromise resolution that would satisfy consistory’s demands, yet would confirm “schismatics” “freedom,” promised by Catherine II’s legislation. The office again undertook an interesting hermeneutic approach to the legislation:

as the supreme legislation grants the schismatics their complete freedom of their faith, so in accordance with this order they should be left in peace, however, only in [their] faith not in the sacrament (sic!); for baptism is a sacrament.

Therefore, the office ordered the *zemskie sudy* to make this ruling clear to “schismatics” and explain that they must obey it, “since after the baptism they would be left in freedom in accordance with the old ritualist faith.”<sup>730</sup> Again, the provincial office threatened them with punishment for disobedience “according to the severity of the law.” Urzhum peasants rejected the ecclesiastical demands again, this time in written statements. Yet, the documents of the provincial office do not contain any evidence of these “schismatics” being punished when the case was marked as

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<sup>729</sup> *GAKO*, f. 583, op. 12, d. 924 (), ll. 7-7 ob.

<sup>730</sup> *Ibid.*, l. 18 (the office’s resolution is not dated, but was apparently initiated sometime between February and April 1793).

“resolved” and was transferred to the archive in April, 1798.<sup>731</sup> Most likely, the ruling was simply ignored and the peasants’ persistence paid off.

In August 1793, the Viatka provincial office received another set of typical complaints from parish clergy, concerning proselytism. The Viatka provincial office resolved these complaints by repeating the same declarative prohibition against proselytism by threatening punishment under the law. Despite the formal outcome, the ruling contained the usual references to *The Instruction to the Legislative Commission* and the 1787 Senate decree, and it concluded in an enlightened manner:

as it appears from the described circumstances the [people] who have fallen into the Schism did not commit any other crime but their being in *the old ritualist faith (vera staroobriadstva)*, and supreme laws order turning [such people] away [from “the Schism”] only with gentle urging to conversion to Orthodoxy; therefore [we] prescribe to the *Urzhumskii sud* to leave the accused free without any oppression and only seek to convert [them] to the true path using all measures.<sup>732</sup>

By “all measures,” the office apparently meant only persuasion and other non-confrontational efforts.

It is noteworthy that this ruling inserted the term “old ritualists” retrospectively: when citing the abbreviated text of the Senate decree to Governor-general Meshcherskii, officials of the provincial office chose to replace the word “schismatics” in the original with “old ritualists.” This substitution suggests that they found “old ritualists” to conform more closely to the intent of the decree.

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<sup>731</sup> *Ibid.*, ll. 22-24.

<sup>732</sup> *GAKO*, f. 583, op. 12, d. 862 (About Urzhum peasant Bushkov and others who do not allow their newly born children for baptism in the official church, 1792-1793), ll. 10 ob.-11.

The ecclesiastical authorities lacked any mechanisms to influence “schismatics” other than oral exhortation, hence they continued to request action on the part of the civil administration.<sup>733</sup> Clerics argued that “schismatics” represented a direct menace to the official Church’s authority, therefore, should be prosecuted without delay. The report of the priest Vladimir Filimonov from Nolinsk warned against the local “schismatic” Mikhailo Kirilov and his associates: “if such deceivers and evil teachers will not be restrained beforehand from the secret sowing of their chaff, they certainly will seize many weak souls to follow their footsteps.”<sup>734</sup> The spiritual consistory added legal arguments to the report and forwarded it to the provincial office. The language of the report apparently did not convince the Viatka provincial office bureaucrats; they replied to the spiritual consistory with undisguised annoyance. The provincial office, they wrote, “cannot bring to trial” such people, because “as the spiritual consistory is *certainly already aware*, people in the Schism ... should remain in that persuasion (*tolk*).”<sup>735</sup> The references to *The Instruction to the Legislative Commission* and the Senate decree from 1787 to Governor-general Meshcherskii substantiated the provincial office’s reply.

The verbal conflict between the civil and ecclesiastical authorities concerning the understanding of the “schismatics” “freedom” reached a peak at the beginning of 1798. Replying to another consistorial list of complaints, the provincial officers expressed their objections: without initiating an investigation or communicating with the local civil authorities, they categorically declined to perform any subsequent action. Notwithstanding the usual intricate bureaucratic

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<sup>733</sup> See, for example: *GAKO*, f. 583, op. 13, d. 724; *Ibid.*, 14, d. 443; *Ibid.*, op. 15, d. 897; *Ibid.*, op. 16, d. 460; *Ibid.*, op. 16, d. 559 (About Nolinsk district “schismatics” Tulanskii and Chirkov, 1796); *Ibid.*, op. 17, d. 1219; and others.

<sup>734</sup> *GAKO*, f. 583, op. 17, d. 1325 (On the prosecution of “schismatics” Kirilov, Rogozhin and others, 1797-1798), ll. 1 ob.-2.

<sup>735</sup> *Ibid.*, l. 3.

language, the words used revealed their utter displeasure with their ecclesiastical counterparts' complaints:

As the provincial office has already positively declined the request of the spiritual consistory ... about the cases similar to this one in accordance to the laws described in the reply, consequently it cannot fulfill this [request] either.<sup>736</sup>

The provincial office again referred to the articles of *The Instruction to the Legislative Commission* and the Senate decree from 1787. It had directed the spiritual consistory to them earlier that year in connection with a similar request for action. That time, however, the provincial officers found it necessary for the first time to cite the articles verbatim and in full to make their reasoning clear.<sup>737</sup>

The consistory did not appreciate the clarification, and it continued to report "schismatics" misdeeds, insisting upon a different assessment of the legislation in question.

The Viatka provincial office's negative reaction to the consistory's requests did not mean that it was completely deaf to the Church's concerns. The provincial office was very attentive to clerical reports, but only as long as they were expressed in a way consonant with the office's perspective. So, in August 1798, just several months after the provincial office's categorical refusal to take action on the consistory's reports, the ecclesiastical authorities complained about the local elected aldermen (*mirskie nachal'niki*) in Nolinsk district. Clergy claimed that the aldermen Terentii Pisleginykh of Verkhopol'skaia village and Petr Beznosikov of Dymovskaia village were open "schismatics."<sup>738</sup> They neither attended services in the official Church themselves, nor "urged" their subordinates to do so; instead they "inspire [faithful parishioners] against it with their

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<sup>736</sup> *GAKO*, f. 583, op. 17, d. 1396, l. 4 ob.

<sup>737</sup> *Ibid.*, d. 1219, l. 3.

<sup>738</sup> *GAKO*, f. 583, op. 18, d. 817 (About the prohibition to elect "staroobriadtsy" for communal duties, 1798). Petr Beznosikov's own brother Iosif was a spiritual leader of a whole Viatka Fedoseevtsy community at the time. "O stepeni otecheskoi," in *K istorii knizhnoi kul'tury Iuzhnoi Viatki: polevye issledovaniia* (Leningrad: Biblioteka Akademii nauk, 1991), 137.

example and secret teachings.”<sup>739</sup> Therefore, the consistory demanded that the provincial office order strictly that “in no circumstances should the *old ritualists* (*staroobriadtsy*) be elected into any communal or any other public positions.”<sup>740</sup> However, this time the ecclesiastical authorities found two more compelling arguments to spur the civil authorities’ intervention: they stressed not only the usual menace that proselytism presented of causing disorder among the flock, but also the threat such aldermen could cause to social peace in general. The consistory warned the provincial office: their “depraved example and obligatory instructions in wrong beliefs incite in subordinates acts and actions adverse to the Church, as well as to public tranquility.”<sup>741</sup> While ecclesiastical discipline did not motivate the civil authorities, the specter of disorder in the society as a whole did. The Viatka provincial office issued an order, subsequently communicated to all districts, “to perform the [consistory’s] demand promptly and without fail” in prohibiting the “*old ritualists*” to be elected to any position of power.<sup>742</sup> Strictly speaking this prohibition did not have a legal basis, because the abolition of the double poll tax *de jure* eliminated the category of “schismatic,” while the category of “old ritualist” was not defined legally.<sup>743</sup> The functioning of law on local level apparently differed from the imperial lawmakers’ intentions.

Similarly, when in 1798 Nolinsk clergy spurred the investigation about a “schismatic cemetery” with a chapel and almshouse constructed near the village Turek, the secular authorities were concerned only with the legality of their existence, not the clergy’s complaints about a “schismatic” menace. The Viatka provincial consistory ordered the local *zemskii sud* to investigate the following question: “when and who established them, by whose order, and what kind of people

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<sup>739</sup> *GAKO*, f. 583, op. 18, d. 817, l. 1.

<sup>740</sup> *Ibid.*, l. 1 ob.

<sup>741</sup> *Ibid.*, l. 1 ob.

<sup>742</sup> *Ibid.*, l. 2 (Viatka provincial office resolution, August 17, 1798).

<sup>743</sup> The prohibition to elect “schismatics” into any supervising positions was stated in the “Spiritual Regulation” (1721) and reinforced in the 1762 manifesto. However, the abolition of the “schismatic” fiscal status *de facto* annulled this ban.

live in” the almshouse? As soon as the authorities found out that “old ritualists” (*staroobriadtsy*) had built it lawfully and there were no runaways among almshouse residents, they dropped the case based on Articles 494, 495, and 496 of *The Instruction to the Legislative Commission*.<sup>744</sup>

A fundamental difference in understanding what the terms “schismatics” and “old ritualists” (*staroobriadtsy*) implied lay at the core of the interpretative conflict between the provincial office and the ecclesiastical consistory. The two parties used these terms in different contexts. For the consistory, “schismatic” was a stigmatizing category rooted in the polemical tradition and Peter I’s repressive legislation; “*staroobriadets*” was nothing more than a synonym for it. The provincial office, in its turn, was invested in a bureaucratic discourse inspired by the Enlightenment. The category of “schismatic” remained in it out of inertia, as a signifier for a legal category created at the beginning of the eighteenth century in Peter I’s legislation and abolished in 1782. The new signifier, “old ritualists” (*staroobriadtsy*) and the idea of “freedom” attached to it assumed the existence of a new signified: a religious group analogous to a separate confession that should be tolerated in accordance with the letter and spirit of the law.

The different ways in which the provincial office and the consistory appealed to Catherine II’s Enlightenment-inspired legislation, specifically *The Instruction to Legislative Commission* (1767) and *The Police Statute* (1782), reveals this gap vividly: the Viatka spiritual consistory appealed to the articles of *The Police Statute*, which in its view reinforced the idea of the official Church’s absolute dominance over the imperial confessional landscape (Articles 242 and 243, banning conversion from the official Church and religious quarrels). The provincial office, in its turn, employed the articles in the *The Instruction to the Legislative Commission*, which proclaimed

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<sup>744</sup> GAKO, f. 583, op. 18, d. 888, ll. 3 ob., 15-15 ob.

the policy of tolerance for “different faiths” and “laws” and the state’s detachment from coercion in spiritual matters (Articles 494, 495, and 496, cited in the beginning of this chapter). “*Staroobriadtsy*” fit in the latter in accordance with the logic revealed in the provincial office’s language. The office disseminated the new language to its subordinates, while the Viatka ecclesiastical authorities propounded the opposite meaning to all levels of the eparchy.

### **Challenges of the New Language**

#### *Secular Bureaucrats*

The notions of “Old Ritualism” and “old ritualists” were certainly new for most Viatka bureaucrats in the 1790s. Since these words came as an addition to the previously existing language, it took time before they took hold and eventually superseded the notions of the “Schism” and “schismatics.” Therefore, these terms’ passage into highly legalist documents of provincial secular authorities gave birth to many complexities, irregularities and surprising uses.

It appears that even though the discourse of enlightened tolerance in religious matters came to Viatka province from the top, particularly from the Senate decrees, the terms “Old Ritualism” and “old ritualists” filtered into the local bureaucratic language as a result of the advocacy on the part of local adherents of the old books, known as “schismatics.” In many interrogation records, just like in the first case of its use by Ivan Shmakov discussed above, it was the peasants on trial who used the term “Old Ritualism” (*staroobriadstvo*) to designate their own religious beliefs.<sup>745</sup> Not surprisingly, bureaucrats working with the interrogation records initially had to add clarification of the term for legal certainty. For instance, the Viatka district peasant Kirill Iugrin,

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<sup>745</sup> See, for example, also the phrase “Old Ritualist faith” (*vera staroobriadcheskaia*) in numerous interrogation records. *GAKO*, f. 583, op. 13, d. 724, l. 1; *Ibid.*, op. 15, d. 853, ll. 18 ob.-19; *Ibid.*, op. 16, d. 559, l. 7 ob.; *Ibid.*, op. 17., d. 65, l. 8; and others.



brought in August 1794 to the local *nizhnii zemskii sud* which was investigating his flight from his place of legal residence, allegedly replied to the routine question concerning his observance of church sacraments: “he has not attended confession and Holy Communion for almost ten years because he turned to the Old Ritualism (*staroobriatstvo*), that is, became one of the schismatics.”<sup>746</sup> Of course, interrogation records of the era preserved in the Viatka archive cannot be treated as interviews or confessions of the peasants on trial. Instead, they represent an official’s interpretation of the accused person’s answers to a carefully defined list of questions. The official’s goal was utilitarian – to determine what legal base could be used to resolve the case. Therefore, the official needed to clarify that behind the term “Old Ritualism” stood the familiar and legally defined category of “schismatic.” Strictly speaking, there was no lawful way to prosecute “Old Ritualism,” unless this term signified the well-known phenomenon of the “Schism.” By equating “Old Ritualism” with the “Schism,” on the one hand, the officials made prosecution possible, while on the other, invalidated the grounds for it for the “Schism” was no longer a crime. In this case, after the interrogation and unsuccessful clerical exhortation the district authorities released Kirilo Iugrin and his wife with no charges.<sup>747</sup>

Some common phrases seem absurd after the introduction of the new word “*old ritualism*” in them. For example, the officer of the Urzhum *nizhniaia rasprava* stated in July 1794 that the “*old ritualists*” Cherezov and Neganov had not returned to “Orthodoxy” even after the exhortation by ecclesiastical authorities and “continue to keep their own old ritualist ritual” (*soderzhat svoi*

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<sup>746</sup> *GAKO*, f. 583, op. 15, d. 65, l. 1 ob. Similar use of the term “*stariabriadstvo*” (“they joined *staroobriadstvo* that is entered the number of schismatics, therefore do not attend [official] Church”) see in: *GAKO*, f. 583, op. 15, d. 506, l. 8. Also in the resolution of Nolinsk *nizhnii zemskii sud* (1798): “since *staroobriadtsy* (that is schismatics) alienate themselves from the Holy Church due to their superstition,” etc. *GAKO*, op. 18, d. 888, l. 15. Other examples of the use of the terms “Old Ritualism” and “Schism” as synonyms: *GAKO*, f. 583, op. 15, d. 193, l. 8; *GAKO*, f. 583, op. 15, d. 65, l. 1 ob.

<sup>747</sup> *GAKO*, f. 583, op. 15, d. 65. *Ibid.*, ll. 1 ob.-2, 4.

*staroobriadcheskoi obriad*).<sup>748</sup> The clerk obviously put together the phrase “in accordance with the ritual of the old printed books” (*po obriadu staropechatnykh knig*) and its derivative “old ritualist” (*staroobriadcheskoi*), and as a result created a redundancy. Alternatively, bureaucrats of the *Nolinskii nizhnii zemskii sud* chose another variant, “schismatic ritual” (*raskol’nicheskii obriad*), stressing a condemnatory meaning.<sup>749</sup> The Orlov *nizhnii zemskii sud* used the phrase “old believers ritual” (*staroverskoi obriad*) in December 1795 to describe the peasant Naum Gonin’s adherents to the “old rituals.” The interrogation report specifically said:

“[the peasant Gonin] heard from various strangers that present-day church rituals are unlike the old ones, that is why he has not partaken of confession and communion for about three years, nor has he attended church services, also thinking the old rituals to be the true ones. He and his wife ... fled to the forest to pray to God in accordance with the *old believer ritual*.”<sup>750</sup>

The terms “old belief” (*staraia vera*) and “old believers” (*starovery*) often appeared in the clerical reports and interrogation records as the name the so-called “schismatics” used for themselves. However, the adjective “old believer” (*staroverskii*) and the noun “ritual” (*obriad*), apparently, merged in a combination “old believer ritual” under the pen of a bureaucrat, just as its analogues, “old ritualist ritual” and “schismatic ritual.”

In the interrogation report of Naum Gonin, cited above, the term “rituals” (*obriady*) in the phrase “old rituals” (*starye obriady*) did not simply represent the plural of “ritual” (*obriad*) from the phrase “old believer ritual” (*staroverskii obriad*). These terms belong to a different registers: the plural “rituals” refer to some common rites performed in the church, while the “ritual,” as in the “old believer ritual,” means the system of rites that constitutes a distinct way of worship, sort

<sup>748</sup> *GAKO*, f. 583, op. 14, d. 443, l. 5 ob.

<sup>749</sup> *GAKO*, f. 583, op. 15, d. 237, l. 6; *Ibid.*, d. 677, l. 13.

<sup>750</sup> *GAKO*, f. 583, op. 14, d. 566, l. 4. Naum Gonin “repented” (*raskaialsia*) during the clerical exhortation and returned to the flock of the official Church. Therefore, he was released from further investigation. *Ibid.*, l. 4 ob.

of confessional entity. For that reason, in many documents of the period contain “ritual” (*obriad*) in conjunction with “faith” (*vera*) and “law” (*zakon*); consequently, it denoted confessional unity and independence. One of the meanings of an English word “rite,” such as in the phrase “the Byzantine rite,” better represents the meaning of the word “*obriad*” in the phrase “*staroverskii obriad*.” For in Russian a “rite” as a body of rituals and “ritual” as an act, are expressed with the same word “*obriad*,” it is only the context of the phrase that helps to determine which of several meanings the word bears in a specific usage. Therefore, the word “ritual” (*obriad*) in the combination “*po obriadu staropechatnykh knig*” should rather be translated as “by the rite of the old printed books,” while “*raskol’nicheskii/staroobriadcheskii obriad*” - as “schismatic/old ritualist rite,” for in both of these cases it meant to stress the confessional entity made up by the people adhered to it.

Catherine II’s “enlightened” legislation declared the toleration of different “faiths.”<sup>751</sup> Therefore, the “old ritualists” had to be put on the same level as other “faiths” who deserved to be tolerated rather than simply be acknowledged as preferring rituals different from those of the official Church. The Urzhum *nizhniaia rasprava*’s ruling in the case of Cherezov and Neganov (discussed above) did just that, in stressing the connection between the “old ritualist rite” and toleration of different “faiths”:

the abovementioned *old ritualists* Cherezov and Neganov have experienced enough exhortation without returning to Orthodoxy, and they continue to keep their own *old ritualist rite* (*staroobriadcheskoi obriad*); in addition the law does not allow the disallowing or prohibition of different *faiths*, therefore this *rasprava* in accordance with the aforesaid law should not coerce them in faith... and for that

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<sup>751</sup> See The Instruction to the Legislative Commission (1767) and the 1773 decree on religious toleration (PSZ, t. 19, no. 13996 (June 17, 1773), 775-776.)

reason [orders] that they be left in complete observance of their *faith*, free from consequences .”<sup>752</sup>

Curiously enough, as used in the Viatka bureaucratic documents, the word “*old ritualists*” itself did not absorb this meaning of the word “rite” (*obriad*), since initially it did not strive to acknowledge the difference with Orthodoxy but the closeness to it, difference in “rituals” but not in “faith.” Yet, it acquired the meaning of unity and independence through the addition of the connotation of “old ritualism” with the “rite” as a body of rituals.

By the very end of the eighteenth century, Viatka secular authorities demonstrated their complete appropriation of the new language.

### *Petitioners*

In the 1790s the Viatka provincial office received at least 15 petitions that pled to restrain encroachments by clergy, to release petitioners from monetary obligations such as fines for failing to attend confession, and to issue permission to build cemeteries. All of them directly or indirectly referred to “freedom” guaranteed in the 1787 Senate decree and almost all of them were in fact satisfied. By choosing effective language the petitioners used this lawful instrument of interaction with the authorities to make the power structure to work for them; at the same time, by enforcing certain type of vocabulary, first of all the terms “Old Ritualism” and “old ritualists,” the petitioners gradually changed the interaction itself.

At the beginning of the 1790s all petitioners used the formula “the society of the rite of the old printed books” (*obshchesvo po obriadu staropechatnykh knig*, or *soderzhaniia obriada*

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<sup>752</sup> GAKO, f. 583, op. 14, d. 443, l. 5 ob.

*staropechatnykh knig*).<sup>753</sup> It appeared not only in the petitions but also in the communal decisions accompanying them, as a formal way of designating the petitioners' status. The communal decision took the form of a formal document in support of a petition aiming to prove the legitimacy of the elected representative. In most cases it replicated the same language as the petition itself. However, beginning in late 1792 the term "old ritualist" (*staroobriadets*) started to appear in them. So, Iakov Mel'nikov signed with uneven handwriting the communal decision of the Nolinsk and Glazov peasants with the following words: "in the place of the above mentioned peasants ... *old ritualist* Iakov Mel'nikov also signed." He also signed in the place of the elected alderman Efrem Kalinin, again identifying himself as an "old ritualist" (*staroobriadets*).<sup>754</sup> Several months later, the same group of peasants chose Efrem Kalinin again to represent their interests before the provincial office. This time the communal decision stated that the "peasants of various settlements who appeared to be old ritualists (*staroobriadtsy*)" chose a "good and unsuspecting person" Efrem Kalinin to represent them.<sup>755</sup>

In November 1794 the term "*old ritualists*" entered the petitions themselves: Parfen Ivanov from Malmyzh district, acting in the name of local "old ritualists" (*saroobriadtsy*), asked the

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<sup>753</sup> *GAKO*, f. 583, op. 11, d. 238 (Case by the petitions of "schismatics" from Glazov, Malmyzh, and Nolinsk districts, 1791-1792), ll. 1-1 ob. (Iakov Mel'nikov from Glazov district, 1791), 2-2 ob. (Iakov Shalimov from Malmyzh district, 1791); *Ibid.*, d. 755, ll. 1-1 ob. (Mikhailo Shvetsov from Sunskaia district, 1791 – about cemetery; granted); *Ibid.*, op. 11, d. 487, ll. 1-1 ob. (Andrei Vetoshkin from Nolinsk district, 1791; written by Mikhailo Shvetsov); *Ibid.*, op. 12, d. 465, ll. 1-1 ob. (Mikhailo Shvetsov and Iakov Shalimov from Nolinsk, Urzhum and Malmyzh districts, 1792 – about payment of *ruga*; satisfied; written by Mikhailo Shvetsov); *Ibid.*, op. 12, d. 999, l. 1 (Efrem Kalinin from Nolinsk and Glazov districts, 1792 – about harassment by clergy; satisfied; written by Mikhailo Shvetsov); *Ibid.*, op. 12, d. 1074, ll. 1-1 ob. (Iakov Shalimov from Malmyzh district, 1792 – cemetery; signed by Mikhailo Shevtsov; granted); *Ibid.*, op. 13, d. 77, ll. 1-1 ob. (Efrem Kalinin from Glazov district, 1793 – cemetery; granted);

The only exception is a petition of Efrem Nikonov from Malmyzh district, which used a very unusual and cumbersome phrase that nonetheless resembled the others cited here: they follow "the spiritual observance in accordance with the rite of the Eastern Catholic Church ... of the confession true to the old written spiritual books." *GAKO*, f. 583, op. 11, d. 238, ll. 68-68 ob.

<sup>754</sup> *GAKO*, f. 583, op. 12, d. 999, ll. 1, 2 ob. (In the situation of almost universal illiteracy among peasants, it is exceptional to find the autograph of a peasant, especially in a statement of his/her confessional affiliation.)

<sup>755</sup> *Ibid.*, op. 13, d. 77, l. 2

provincial office for permission to establish a cemetery.<sup>756</sup> The communal decision was especially revealing since it elaborated on the meaning of the term. “Staroobriadtsy” was treated as a replacement for “schismatic;” the authors even connected it to the payment of the double poll tax by claiming that petitioners’ forefathers were “registered old ritualists” (*zapisnye staroobriadtsy*):

as our forefathers, grandfathers, and father, and we themselves after them, too, since olden times are registered *old ritualists*; that is why we used to pay double poll tax in comparison to all other peasants until Her Imperial Majesty’s supreme mercy for *old ritualists* was extended, so that they were on a par with all other peasants in single and not in the double poll tax.<sup>757</sup>

Needless to say, there were no and could not be “registered old ritualists” (*staroobriadtsy*): the original 1716 law on the double poll tax did not talk about “old ritualists,” of course, because that term had not yet been coined; instead, it used the term “schismatics.”<sup>758</sup>

This communal decision also connected the term “old ritualists” (*staroobriadtsy*) with a confessional identity, or “faith,” they adhered to:

we do not have a place to bury our deceased because clergymen do not allow them to be buried near the chapel; and therefore we carry a deep offence and suffer from a need; for that necessity we wish to build *for our faith* and at our own expense a cemetery enclosed by a wooden wall, just like other *staroobriadtsy* did.

The meaning of the term “faith” in this case can be clarified with the evidence from interrogation records. They contain the combination “*pomorskaia staroobriadcheskaia vera*,” that is the adherence to the “old ritualist faith from Pomor’e.”<sup>759</sup> The latter formula referred to a specific

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<sup>756</sup> *GAKO*, f. 583, op. 14, d. 1166 (), l. 1.

<sup>757</sup> *Ibid.*, ll. 2-2 ob. See another example with associating “schismatics” registration with the notion of “*staroobriadets*,” this time in the interrogation records: *GAKO*, f. 583, op. 15, d. 193, l. 4 ob.

<sup>758</sup> *PSZ*, t. 5, no. 2991 (February 8, 1716), 179.

<sup>759</sup> *GAKO*, f. 583, op. 15, d. 223, l. 7 See also: *GAKO*, f. 583, op. 15, d. 193, l. 5 ob.; *Ibid.*, op. 16, d. 988, ll. 3 ob.-4; *Ibid.*, op. 17, d. 1042, l. 20 ob. The officials could use in this case a more derogatory word combination – “priestless old ritualists” (*staroobriadtsy bezpopovshchina*). *Ibid.*, op. 18, d. 888, l. 11 ob.

division within the Old Belief. That means that the notion of “old ritualist” (*staroobriadets*) here referred to a more general category that united all people following the old rituals.

The term “*old ritualists*” did not replace the formula “the rite by/of the old printed books” altogether. Instead, until the end of the century both terms remained in use in petitions, often in combination.<sup>760</sup> So, the collective decision (*prigovor*) of the Glazovskaia *okruga* peasants, composed by one of their own, the “*staroobriadets*” Demid Prokoshev, used the following self-identifying formula: “old ritualists keeping the rite of the old printed books” (*soderzhaniia obriada staropechatnykh knig staroobriadtsy*).<sup>761</sup> That and the fact that they used to pay the double poll tax before it was abolished (in 1782) gave the petitioners, or so they argued, legal protection against any encroachments by local clergy of the official Church.<sup>762</sup> The petitioners tried to lend further legitimacy to their request, by repeatedly stressing the specificity of their status: as former “schismatics,” adherents of the “rite” in accordance with old printed books, and, finally, as “old ritualists.” Apparently, the latter two identities were not completely interchangeable. In some contexts they belonged to different categories. On the one hand, the label “the rite by the old printed books” as well as “old ritualist” designation referred to a confessional identity that was supposed to distinguish its adherents from the official Church in the eyes of enlightened bureaucrats. On the other hand, “*old ritualists*” was a preferred common name for the people who

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<sup>760</sup> Petitions with the phrase “by the rite of the old printed books” formula: *GAKO*, f. 583, op. 16, d. 282, ll. 1-1 ob. (Timofei Kniazev and Vasilii Vaganov from Urzhum district, 1796 – cemetery, granted); *Ibid.*, d. 988 (Grigorii Domnin from Urzhum, 1796 – about his son’s marriage “by the rite of the old printed books,” he was released but the marriage was terminated; written by Mikhailo Shvetsov)

“*Staroobriadtsy*.” *GAKO*, f. 583, op. 17, d. 1042 (Ermolai Kniazev from Urzhum district, 1797 – protection against a priest’s “offences,” granted); *Ibid.*, op. 17, d. 1111, ll. 1-1 ob. (Aleksei Bushkov from Urzhum district, 1797 – cemetery; no objections).

<sup>761</sup> *GAKO*, f. 583, op. 15, d. 853, l. 2.

<sup>762</sup> *Ibid.*, ll. 1-2.

adhered to “the rite by the old printed books,” their own alternative to the derogatory category of “schismatics.”

### *Clergy*

The language of the official Church authorities demonstrated more permanence throughout the second half of the century in comparison to their secular fellows. Ever since the first official case of the “Schism” in Viatka in 1765, the local spiritual consistory urged parish priests to “exhort [schismatics] in a gentle and humble way with evidence from the Holy Scriptures.”<sup>763</sup> Platon Levshin promoted the same message and non-confrontational language in his *Exhortation*, published in 1765/1766. The Synod distributed the *Exhortation* among bishoprics, including the Viatka eparchy.<sup>764</sup> It clearly explained in ecclesiastical language the main agenda of the state’s enlightened tolerance towards the so-called “schismatics:”

It is true that Her Majesty wholeheartedly wishes to lead you [“schismatics”] out from your delusions and unite you with the one flock of Christ’s faithful; however, not through severity and torment but through gentleness, exhortation and instruction. For Her Majesty knows that no one can be coerced into the faith and that conversion of the heart is God’s duty. Therefore, Her Majesty commands all spiritual overseers to seek to convert you not by austerity but through gentleness and evangelical spirit. If the Holy Spirit does touch your hearts and you wish to remain in your hardened thoughts, you indeed will be left to God’s judgement.<sup>765</sup>

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<sup>763</sup> At the same, Viatka bishop Varfolomei was uncompromising with people who did not submit to “gentle and humble” exhortations, prohibiting the burial of stubborn “schismatics” in the official Orthodox cemeteries. *GAKO*, f. 237, op. 2, d. 21 (Protocols of the Viatka spiritual office sessions, 1765), l. 36.

<sup>764</sup> The reference to the use of this book in the process of “schismatics” admission to the official Church see in: *GAKO*, f. 237, op. 74, d. 623 (The case of the conversion of “schismatics” from the Sunskaia estate, 1772), l. 434. (May also look at the oath against “the Schism” – *GAKO*, f. 237, op. 74, d. 319, ll. 3-4 ob.? See PSPR for its creation – it is most likely older).

<sup>765</sup> “Uveshchanie k raskol’nikam,” 83-84.



The idea that coercion into faith is futile was not new, but it sounded fresh and apt in the context of state-promoted toleration.

The Viatka church officials followed the *Exhortation*'s guidelines in discourse. From now on this platitude concluded almost every ruling by the consistory in regard to "schismatics," even though those decisions demanded a severest secular punishment possible for all "schismatics" consistently and without exception. So in September 1783 the Viatka spiritual consistory directed the parish priest of the church of the Ascension (*Voznesenskaia tserkov'*) in the village Sunskoe to persuade the peasant Emel'ian Chulkin to abandon his "schismatic superstition." The consistory's order specifically stated that the priest should, "in accordance with his priestly duty, preach God's Word with sufficient evidence from the Holy Scriptures as to what the Orthodox faith, its tenets, and Christian law are, and what the essence of church rituals is, and what the distinction between rituals and tenets of faith is, and to exhort ["schismatics"] with exposition and lead them out from the darkness of ignorance and error, and show them the straight and soul-saving road of evangelical truth, which leads the faithful to eternal life."<sup>766</sup> At the same time, consistory clerks insisted upon enforcing Peter I's highly restrictive and repressive laws upon the "schismatic" Emel'ian Chulkin, as well as Article 243 of *The Police Statute*, which mandated actual arrest and prosecution for abandoning official Orthodoxy.<sup>767</sup>

Bishop Lavrentii of Viatka, the official head spiritual consistory, in his letter to Chief Procurator Viazemskii also stressed that he promoted clemency towards the so-called "old books people" (*staroknizhniki*) among local clergy:

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<sup>766</sup> *GAKO*, f. 583, op. 3, d. 1153, l. 8 (see also, for example: *GAKO*, f. 237, op. 74, d. 806 (The case about "schismatics" in Kukarka district, 1780), l. 11; *Ibid.*, f. 583, op. 1a, d. 859 (The case about "schismatics" Chulkin and Vetoshkin, 1781-1783), l. 1 ob.; *Ibid.*, f. 583, op. 6, d. 98, ll. 3 ob.-4, and others.

<sup>767</sup> *GAKO*, f. 583, op. 3, d. 1153, l. 7 ob.

I ordered all priests and clergy of my eparchy a long time ago that they should not cause any rudeness or harm to *old books people* in regard to their sophistry about the faith. And if they [clergymen] have a dispute with them [*old books people*], they [clergymen] should talk and act towards them [*old books people*] with the gentleness and good sense appropriate for pastors; and indeed that order is being carried out.<sup>768</sup>

Notwithstanding Bishop Lavrentii's claims, the consistory did not fully rely on the power of clerical verbal persuasion. Legally constrained from taking non-ecclesiastical measures, the church authorities consistently and firmly demanded such action against "schismatics" from their civil counterparts. Civil authorities generally complied with requests from the consistory to impose draconian measures until the Senate intervened in 1787, forestalling the punishment of the Vetoshkins, et. al. Similarly, in the case when local communal officials for some reason failed to fulfill the legally prescribed penalty, the Viatka consistory informed the higher secular authorities and asked that the penalty be carried out.<sup>769</sup>

Even though the Synod's order from March 1783 that abolished the category of "schismatic" in any sort of registries as well as in discourse addressed only Bishop Avraam of Tobol'sk, it reached Viatka ecclesiastical authorities too. The Viatka spiritual consistory turned parts of the Synod's decree into an order, which it disseminated to all clergymen of the eparchy at least twice, in 1786 and 1787, and repeated it many times in 1780s and 1790s in the resolutions of individual cases.<sup>770</sup> In particular, the consistory urged parish priests and other local ecclesiastical authorities:

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<sup>768</sup> *RGIA*, f. 796, op. 65, d. 379, l. 3 ob. (Bishop Lavrentii's letter to Aleksandr Viazemskii, October 28, 1784)

<sup>769</sup> *GAKO*, f. 237, op. 74, d. 841, ll. 20-21.

<sup>770</sup> *GAKO*, f. 583, op. 11, d. 238, ll. 84-84 ob.; *GAKO*, f. 583, op. 10, d. 1015, l. 3 ob.; and others.

to bring their parishioners, lapsed from Orthodoxy... to the [true] piety by themselves as well as through their faithful neighbors and relatives, *when there is an opportunity and where the place is decent and time allows, not hastily and by severity or with coercion, but by Apostolic instruction and exhortation, and diligent insistence, showing gentleness, patience, humaneness, and priestly love using arguments from the Holy Scriptures; in case of their disinclination, [parish priests] should not cause them any violence and oppression, much less torment, not even engage in crude looks and humiliation, which instead of transformation can lead to even more discord and anger.*<sup>771</sup>

In addition, the consistory found it necessary to enforce the official version of Orthodox piety through the lives of clergymen, who often were a target of denunciations of drunkenness and rudeness. “For even more motivation and success [in converting “schismatics”], parish priests should seek to conduct their lives blamelessly and benevolently and be the model of piety,” the consistory’s order stated.<sup>772</sup>

The relenting rhetoric of the Synod decree did not change but rather reinforced ecclesiastical discourse. Even though the decree abolished the concept of “schismatic” altogether, I could not find any mention of this abolition in the documents of the Viatka ecclesiastical authorities. On the contrary, the term “schismatic” remained predominant in consistory documents throughout the period under study. Ecclesiastical authorities were reluctant to accept the new language, preserving the generally derogatory tone towards the dissidents. Still, inevitably, the language of the church authorities in time became a more and more confusing tangle of different discourses, as a consequence of the circulation of bureaucratic documents.

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<sup>771</sup> *Ibid.*, ll. 84-84 ob. Compare to the Synod decree: “Synod order to the bishop of Tobol'sk, March 9, 1783,” in *ChOIDR*, kn. 2 (1862), 141-142.

<sup>772</sup> *GAKO*, f. 583, op, 10, d. 1015, l. 2.

## **Conclusion**

On the surface, this chapter examined a stylistic change in the language of the documents Viatka bureaucrats produced in the last decade of the eighteenth century regarding local religious dissidents. Nonetheless, not only did this change translate into an important shift in the lives of many specific people, it also helps us to look at the Enlightenment process in the period of early modernity from a completely different angle. This chapter clearly demonstrates that the eighteenth-century ideals of the enlightened toleration, in fact, can hardly be understood fully in isolation from the context of their functioning on the level of day-to-day bureaucratic practice. The Viatka case reveals not so much a top-down process of slow but steady “enlightening” of the society at large, even its least educated strata, or a gradual sifting of noble ideals down the hierarchy of power; instead, this case shows the expansion of enlightened toleration in Russia as a convoluted bureaucratic process with many diverse contributors. The highest imperial bureaucrats, such as the chief procurator of the Senate or governor-general of Viatka province, played in this process a no more significant role than the local peasants, who were hardly aware of the philosophical foundations of religious freedom, yet were ready and capable of using the available instruments to gain the liberty to believe without interference from the side of the state and the official Church. Truly, if language is a weapon, in practice it is a double-edged one.

## CONCLUSION

The mid-seventeenth-century conflict over the correction of liturgical books, known as the “Schism,” proved to be an event of great significance for Russian history. Over the last century and a half historians have been studying rigorously different aspects of this phenomenon, including its religious, social, political, and economic origins and implications. Yet, the language the church and state authorities used to identify and constrain the dissent has been largely overlooked. The study of language, or discourse about the “Schism” and “schismatics” is of utmost importance. As Robert Moore reasoned in regard to the persecution of perceived “heretics” and minority groups in Medieval Europe, the explanation for the persecution should rather “be sought not among the victims, but among the persecutors.”<sup>773</sup> Similarly, the identification and suppression of the so-called “schismatics” in Russia is first and foremost indicative of the contemporaneous state and society, not the people thus identified and suppressed. This dissertation takes the language about the “Schism” and “schismatics” as the primary object.

The first part of this study discussed the conceptual context of the changes in the liturgical books and the understanding of the notions of “schism” and “schismatic” in Russian polemical tradition. The study showed that the conflict over the correction of liturgical books developed over two fundamental questions – of the possibility of change and of power. This disagreement has been predominantly described in historiography in the categories of reformism and traditionalism: on the one side, Nikon and his associates purportedly promoted an improved, more sound and up to date version of Orthodoxy, while on the other side, the conservative zealots, such as Avvakum Petrov or Nikita Dobrynin, tried to hold on to the old church ways. Yet, the categories of reformism and traditionalism are utterly incompatible with the worldview of the time. I argue, based on an

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<sup>773</sup> Robert I. Moore, *The Formation of a Persecuting Society: Authority and Deviance in Western Europe, 950-1250*, 2nd ed. (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), vi.

analysis of the key concept of “correction” (*ispravlenie*), which designated the changes in liturgical books, that the champions and opponents of the new books perceived the historic time and the possibility of change in the religious sphere in the same way: both looked to some imaginary past as an ideal to align with. Their disagreement, therefore, was about what this ideal specifically was.

Another issue is that the language of religious polemic that developed in Muscovy by the mid-seventeenth century did not allow non-confrontational solution to an ecclesiastical dispute. This language imposed a rigid dualistic framework that made the positions of the correctors and their opponents irreconcilable. Ardent apocalyptic expectations that preceded the changes fostered the debate. As a result, using the vocabulary of the time, there were pastors, guarding the flock, and there were wolves, encroaching on it in these latter days. In the theological terms, the mid-seventeenth-century Muscovite world was divided into the rightful Orthodox and heretics, with no shades or degrees. It follows that the notion of “schismatic,” which the church polemicists used among other ecclesiastical labels for their opponents, derived from “schism” which was understood as a conscious, Devil-inspired attempt to destroy the Church, rather than merely as a designation for a renegade, who abandons it, as canon law asserted.

It also follows from this research that there was no “Schism” in seventeenth-century Muscovy in the modern sense of this word — that is, a coherent teaching or movement in support of the old church ways. For, the seventeenth-century so-called “schismatics” were whoever the authorities labeled as enemies of the Church’s unity, instigators of “schisms,” not representatives of the “Schism” as a persuasion or concord of likeminded people. The civil powers, in their turn, readily assisted their ecclesiastical counterparts in prosecution of the dissenters. Both the state and the church saw in the upholders of the old books first and foremost “mutineers” who dangerously

disrupted the present power structure either by speaking out against their spiritual superiors or by failing to follow their commands in rejecting the new books and the new rites they contained.

At the dawn of the eighteenth century, in an era of social and political transformations in Russia under Peter I's rule, the "Schism" appeared as a full-bodied concept. It coincided with the emergence of the legal category of "schismatic" in a state that was increasingly bureaucratizing and striving for all-pervasive control over the sovereign's many subjects. Peter I initiated the creation of such a category by ordering in 1716 to officially register all the people dubbed as "schismatics" and to levy a special tax on them; as a result, the subsequent legislation had to define in clear terms who were the people to be registered and pay the said tax. The tsar did not aim to legalize adherence to the old church ways but rather to penalize the dissenting subjects for their religious and, as a consequence, political disloyalty.

The outcome of Peter I's measures was the inception of a quasi-social category of "schismatic" vested with a set of ambiguous rights and responsibilities. This outcome was not what was intended: the tsar aimed to eradicate the "Schism," that is all of the "schismatics" and their "delusions" together. He assumed that a considerable fiscal burden would be a strong enough incentive for his dissident subjects to abide by the officially defined standard of piety. Instead, some of the dissenters readily agreed to "give Caesar what is Caesar's," while others attempted to hide their spiritual life away from the state's view by scattering throughout the Russian empire and abroad. Needless to say, the category of "schismatic" formulated in the Petrine law attests in the first place to the conception of the well-ordered state the Russian ruling elite strove for at the time, and not to people's religiosity.

My research reveals that in addition to being an instrument of spiritual disciplining the legal category of "schismatic" could serve as a bargaining device. The abrupt registration of more

than a thousand peasants in the “schismatic” status that occurred in Viatka province in the mid-1760s demonstrates this well. The local peasants attempted to utilize the ambiguity of “schismatic” status as a way to negotiate with the state about their fiscal obligations. As a consequence, the peasants hoped to secure for themselves a better social standing. As soon as the newly appeared “schismatics” realized that their attempt proved futile, they rapidly started to return to the official Church’s flock. Notwithstanding the outcome, this case proves that the performative character of legal language gave even humble subjects the ability to participate in the state’s power structure. The use of the proper vocabulary in the Viatka peasants’ petitions spurred a reaction from the imperial bureaucratic machine and set it to work in the way the peasants desired.

The last, third part of the dissertation, continues to investigate the praxis of the imperial legal language. It particularly uncovers the ways the concept of “schismatic” correlated with the ideals of the enlightened toleration, which spread in Russian state discourse in the second half of the eighteenth century. Empress Catherine II herself pronounced with clarity in the 1760s and 1770s the end of coercion in matters of faith, invoking the values of social tranquility and the common good. The denigrating notion of “schismatic” fitted poorly within the new intellectual milieu and it was de jure abandoned in 1782, together with the double poll tax that had been directly associated with it since 1716. At the same time, the new notion of “old ritualism” (*staroobriadchestvo*) arose, entangled with the principles of religious toleration. By the end of the eighteenth century it came to signify the confessional unity for the adherents of the old books and manifested the promise of religious freedom.

The emergence of “old ritualism” in the documents of the Viatka province bureaucrats, studied in the last chapter, reveals the mechanisms through which local “schismatics” were able to secure the freedom to practice their faith without interference. The local dissidents adopted the



notion of “old ritualism” in the beginning of the 1790s and introduced it to the provincial circulation of bureaucratic documents. In the context of state-promoted religious tolerance it became an effective tool to shield themselves against ecclesiastical encroachments and to demand from the provincial civil authorities confessional rights and liberties. Put differently, this chapter looks at the Enlightenment-inspired religious tolerance as a bureaucratic process with many various contributors.

The major implication of my research is that it demonstrated the need to change the way religion and religiosity are discussed in the context of Russian past and present. Many categories that originated in the past and that are used in historical analysis today carry in themselves the presumptions created by the dominant Russian Orthodox Church and the state that embraced it. “Schismatic” is not a term describing someone’s religious views, but an ecclesiastic stigma that also acquired layers of meanings in highly restrictive secular law. The notion of “old ritualist,” even though neutral at first glance, still was a compromise with the regime that upheld the ideal of a mono-confessional state, even though this had never been the Russian reality. Either under the name of the “Schism” or “Old Ritualism,” throughout the eighteenth century and up until the twentieth century, religious dissidence has been tolerated to certain degrees, but never approved. Old Belief became a term of self-identification for adherents; nonetheless, it was born out of a need for them to contrast themselves with the officially embraced version of Orthodoxy. In the circle of co-believers, the Old Believers naturally tended to refer to themselves simply as Christians. Therefore, by treating the notions of “schismatic,” “old ritualist” and Old Believer as synonyms, signifiers for essentially the same phenomenon, speakers misrepresent the historical context of their origin. Historians should be sensitive of these contexts for the sake of accuracy as well as out of moral obligation to the people under study.

Even more important for a historian of religion is the problem of epistemology. The ecclesiastical labels, such as Old Believer, *Dukhobor*, or *Judaizer*, for instance, carry in themselves the ecclesiastical taxonomies, the systems of classification the official Church, the state, and academe use to comprehend the complexity of human spiritual experiences. The notions of “cult,” “sect,” “denomination,” or even “religion” itself presume an ideal to which to compare, whether in the form a certain type of spirituality is expressed or in the “quality” of its tenets. Re-assessment of these classifications is an essential underpinning of scholarly investigation.

One recent case from modern Russian practice perfectly illustrates the point above. In April 2017 the Supreme court of the Russian Federation made the decision to prohibit the Jehovah’s Witnesses from operating in Russia and to confiscate the organization’s assets. The decision was based on attestations that Jehovah’s Witnesses spread extremist information by asserting the exclusive nature of their understanding of Christian doctrine. The notions of “sect,” “cult,” “pseudo-Christian denomination,” “religious fanaticism,” and other charged definitions informed the discussion in the expert community, news and social media that accompanied the prohibition. These definitions assume both the superciliousness in regard to so-called “non-traditional” religions, inherited from Russian imperial discourse, as presented in this dissertation; and the Soviet-era disdain towards manifestations of religiosity. Notwithstanding the inanity of the court’s decision, the sphere of professional, public and media discourse in regard to religion and religiosity requires urgent revision. A discussion about the history of the language of religious persecution is a good start.

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